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Three Years Among the Comanches

THE NARRATIVE OF NELSON LEE
THE TEXAS RANGER

Containing a detailed account of his captivity among the Indians, his singular escape through the instrumentality of his watch, and fully illustrating Indian life as it is on the war path and in the camp.

With an Introduction by Walter Prescott Webb

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INTRODUCTION

By Walter Prescott Webb

This small book contains the account of the most exciting and adventurous years of Nelson Lee. It was published in 1859, when Sam Houston was governor of Texas, just before Lincoln was elected, when practically the whole American West was still the abode of what Richard Irving Dodge so appropriately called "Our Wild Indians." The adventures which justified Lee in writing the book began when he arrived in Texas in 1840 and ended eighteen years later when he escaped from the Comanche Indians and returned by way of Texas and Havana to his native state of New York, where he arrived on November 10, 1858.

His recollections of this eighteen-year period must have been hot in his memory. He began to tell his tale, and the tale he told convinced his hearers that he was speaking the truth. The world then, as now, had in it those vicarious adventurers who are willing to collect, edit, and publish accounts of hazardous living which they lack the daring to risk. Nelson Lee could talk, but he could not write. The unknown editor says: "The narrative has been recorded, as received from his lips, from day to day, not precisely in his own words, inasmuch as he is not an educated, though an intelligent man, but his history is told substantially as he relates it." Two reasons are given for the literary ven-

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ture: Nelson Lee had returned in poverty, "stripped of all he possessed"; and many white people, mainly women, remained in Indian captivity, from which Lee had just escaped. The publicity might at one stroke recoup Nelson Lee's finances and lead to the ransom of the captives. Behind these good reasons was the real one, the simple fact that this scarred-up mariner of the western plains had a story to tell.

The remarkable speed with which the story was put in print intrigues us. Lee says he "arrived in the United States" on November 10, 1858. The preface by the unknown editor bears the date January 1, 1859, the year of the copyright date. This means that the manuscript was completed within less than sixty days after the wanderer landed.

The story falls into two parts. The first part covers the period from 1840 to 1855, the fifteen years that Lee spent in Texas. This long span is treated in eight chapters—really in seven, because the first chapter deals with his early life and gets him to Texas in 1840, at the age of thirty-three. His life there would have justified a book in itself because this man hunted out the places of excitement and put himself in the midst of it repeatedly. He claims to have joined the Texas Rangers under Ewen Cameron, to have been with Ben McCulloch to warn the settlers after the Comanche raid on Linnville in 1840, and to have been present at the Battle of Plum Creek where the Comanches were defeated and the plunder from Linnville was recovered. He went on the Mier Expedition, but fled when the Texans surrendered, swam the Río Grande, and made his way back to San Antonio. In connection with this fiasco, he made his only political comment. He thought President Sam Houston designed the failure of the Mier Expedition and shows himself to have been anti-Houston.

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Introduction

There is little doubt that he served with Ben McCulloch,[114] Jack Hays, and Samuel H. Walker, all famous Texas Rangers. He joined up for the Santa Fé Expedition, but had to give that up on account of illness. He served in Hays' regiment of Texas Rangers for the duration of the Mexican War. In the quiet periods he engaged in Indian fighting and became a trader in horses and cattle.

There is no better description of the life of the Texas Rangers than that given by Nelson Lee. He is sparing of dates and shy of first names of commanders and persons with whom he was not closely associated, but in most instances he convinces the reader that he was there.

The second part of the story is told in seven chapters. It covers a period of three years, from March, 1855, to November, 1858. Lee and six other men formed a "joint company" to drive a herd of horses to California. They hired sixteen American drovers and three Mexican horse breakers, gathered a herd of 395 horses, and set out from San Patricio for California by way of El Paso. Lee gives the full names of each of these men, of whom he was the only survivor. The party crossed the Río Grande, "passing to the left of the river towns." On April 2, the Comanches attacked in the night and killed or captured the entire party. Later they killed all the captives except Nelson Lee, who saved himself by the use of an alarm watch which fascinated the superstitious Indians, particularly the chief. Lee, along with the watch, was subsequently traded to two other chiefs for fabulous quantities of horses and buffalo hides.

It is his account of life among the Indians that makes this book of unique value. The story he tells is absorbing, but the information he conveys about how the Comanches lived before they were affected by the white man is in-

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valuable. As an example, he tells how the Indians made a captive safe for the night. They made him lie down on his back with arms and legs outstretched. Each arm and leg was tied with buffalo thongs to stakes so that none could be moved. Two stakes were driven in the ground on either side of his neck, and these were connected with a thong that fit tight across the throat.

Lee finally managed to escape, and, after incredible hardship, made his way into the Mexican settlements and finally back to his own people. It is probable, though not certain, that he spent the years of his captivity in the western part of Mexico.

The little book of 224 pages is now extremely scarce, much sought after by libraries and collectors. Its reprint in the Western Frontier Library will be welcomed by all lovers of such characters as Cabeza de Vaca, Huckleberry Finn, and the Ancient Mariner. They all had this in common: Each made a hard journey and returned home to tell about it.

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The Indian dress—Discovery of the watch—Half-past three —It strikes the alarm—Gathering up the plunder—A heart-rending sight—Probable cause of being unexpectedly attacked—The infernal pantomime—Blindfolded and lashed to a mule—Departure of the caravan—The uncomfortable ride—Performances on the tightrope—Tremendous applause—The night encampment—Favorite food of the Comanches—Appearance of the captives—Amusements at supper—Horseflesh hissing hot—Put to bed and tucked up —The captive's night thoughts—Crossing the river in a buffalo skin—The war whoop—Arrival at an Indian village —The wonderful watch—Original doctrines—The war dance—Description of an Indian village.

I soon became aware that the only members of the party who escaped the massacre, which proved to have been bloody as it was sudden, were Thomas Martin, John Stewart, Aikens, and myself. The first two had been secured much in the same manner I was, but Aikens, who was sleeping in a tent, had succeeded in escaping a short distance, and had engaged in a hot scuffle, during which he fired upon his assailants before he was overpowered. The first step taken by the savages, after the confusion had subsided, was to strip us of every particle of apparel, and clothe us in their own fashion of dress, which consisted simply [29] of buckskin leggins, with a hunting shirt of the same material fringed at the bottom, and at the cuffs, and tied in front with strings.

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Discovery of the Watch

While they were stripping and dressing me in this manner, one of them picked up my coat and discovered the watch. He seized it with avidity, examined it intently, turning it over and over, immensely pleased, as his countenance plainly indicated, with the singular and pretty bauble. While thus regarding it, the minute hand ticked round to half-past three, when the alarm went off. The utter astonishment of the Indian was beyond description. Holding it out at extreme arm's length, his head thrown back, and staring wildly, he was too much surprised, as it roared and rattled for two minutes, to decide whether it was safest to let it fall to the ground or retain it in his grasp. By the time it ceased, a dozen had gathered round him, looking into each other's faces in silent wonder. The one who held it presently pointed to me, then at the watch, then at the spot where he had found it, speaking at the same time fast and earnestly, informing them, I suppose, that I was the owner of it. Approaching and holding it out to me, they made signs expressive of their desire that I would cause it to repeat the alarm. The idea at once flashed upon my mind, that I might make it serve a useful purpose. They untied my hands—when I accepted it with an air of reverence and adoration, wound it up solemnly, and so regulated it that in a few minutes off it went again, and again was the dusky crowd struck with increased wonder and astonishment. This was repeated frequently, the savages in the meantime holding it to their ears to hear it tick as they had seen me do, when the chief wrapped it carefully and tenderly in his deerskin pouch and placed it in his bosom, not, however, until I had comprehended from their gestures, such as pointing upwards, then at the watch, then at myself, that they regarded it as something supernatural which connected me with the Great Spirit.

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727 Their next step was to collect the plunder. In this, they were, indeed, thorough. Not only did they gather up all our buffalo skins, Mexican blankets, rifles and revolvers, culinary utensils, and the like, but the dead bodies were stripped to the last shred, and tied on the backs of their mules. Nothing was left behind. By this time the morning light began to break on the eastern mountains, and preparations were made to depart. Before starting, however, they unbound our feet, conducted us through the camp, pointing out the stark corpses of our butchered comrades, who had lain down to sleep with such light and happy hearts the night before. The scene was awful and heart-rending beyond the imagination of man to conceive. Not satisfied with merely putting them to death, they had cut and hacked the poor, cold bodies in the most brutal and wanton manner; some having their arms and hands chopped off, others emboweled, and still others with their tongues drawn out and sharp sticks thrust through them. They then led us out some three or four hundred yards from the camp and pointed out the dead bodies of the sentinels, thus assuring us that not one of the entire party had escaped. The bodies of the sentinels were lying close together at the south side of a thicket, which suggested to me the probable reason of our being surprised before an alarm was given. The night, as I have said, was chilly, and instead of riding round the camp at proper distances from each other, as was their duty, they had undoubtedly huddled together under the thicket, in order to protect themselves from the cold wind that swept down the valley. In this position the Indians had crept up unperceived through the fog, and dispatched them so suddenly there was no opportunity to make an outcry. Beyond question we had been watched from the mountains ever since our arrival in the

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valley—indeed, I learned as much from them afterwards— 727
so that they had plenty of time to deliberate upon the plan of attack. Before leaving Texas, I had insisted upon taking with me a favorite watch dog, but Aikens was confident he would prove only an annoyance, and I was persuaded, though reluctantly, to leave him behind. Had I adhered to my purpose, his vigilance, peradventure, might have saved us; for though they numbered between two and three hundred, I have no doubt we could have repelled them, had we stood on the defense and been prepared to receive them.

During all the time they were thus exhibiting the result of their savage work, they resorted to every hideous device to inspire us with terror. They would rush toward us with uplifted tomahawks, stained with blood, as if determined to strike, or grasp us by the hair, flourishing their knives around our heads as though intending to take our scalps. So far as I could understand their infernal shouts and pantomime, they sought to tell us that the fate which had overtaken our unfortunate companions not only awaited us, but likewise the whole race of the hated white man. All the dead, without exception, were scalped and the scalps, still fresh, were dangling from their belts.

This sickening and frightful ceremony ended, dressed deerskins were thrown over our heads, drawn down over the face, and tied with a string, closely about the neck. We were thus completely blindfolded, and would soon have suffocated, had not a small hole been cut through the skin, under the nose, and in front of the mouth, sufficient to admit air necessary for respiration. We were then each mounted on a mule over an Indian saddle without stirrups, our hands tied behind us at the wrists, our feet brought as near together as possible under the body of the animal and

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727 firmly lashed. In this situation it was possible for us to roll off sidewise if we pleased, but it was impossible to extricate ourselves from the beasts.

The caravan set forward in the following order: Our drove in advance, with outriders in front, and to the right and left, guarding it in the same manner we had previously; behind the drove rode the warriors, and in their rear came the pack mules, and the mules bearing the prisoners, without bridles, but left to follow at their own leisure and discretion. It is customary, not only with the Indians on such [492] occasions as this, but with Mexican and Texan drovers on a long march, to leave their pack mules free to follow, and never do they stray out of the line or linger many rods behind. Our position, bound as we were, however, was not comfortable. Utterly powerless, so far as guiding the animal was concerned, which, like the wind, wandered where it listed, sometimes pushing and crowding in among the pack mules, sometimes suddenly stopping to take a bite or two of grass, and in that natural and innocent act, throwing us forward on the pommel of the saddle with the impression we were going over his head, the next moment starting suddenly on a sharp trot, throwing us as far backward—our predicament was indeed awkward as it was tormenting. But these were only the light afflictions and trials of the prairie. When our journey came to lead us through strips of timber land, as it often did, then the measure of our tribulation was full, indeed. The first time the thoughtless brute ran under a limb, striking me in the face and knocking me off, or rather turning me round so that my head reversed positions with my feet, the sensation produced was horrible, but practice makes perfect is a true adage, and, in time, habituates a man to almost anything. My frequent repetitions of this performance on the *tightrope*

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rendered me an adept in this sort of somersault. There was 727
one consolation attending it, the moment I went over, the mule would invariably stop, and an Indian as invariably run and right me up again.

Unable to see, I was in perpetual suspense. If the mule happened to be traveling at a sharp pace on these occasions, and the branches strong, it became a violent and serious affair, not only to the extent of inflicting great pain, but of endangering life. As it was, my face and breast were sorely bruised, resembling more the appearance of a pugilist returning from some Long Point than the ordinary features of a man. It afterwards afforded the Indians most excellent [522] sport, a subject for infinite jest, and every performance was treated with "tremenduous applause." No comic actor ever so amused his audience. Indeed, I could tell sometimes from the laughter that would begin to arise that danger was near, and lying close on the mule's neck, escape it. It was aggravating beyond endurance, converting any humbler emotions I might have entertained to those of uncontrollable wrath. If each malediction I bestowed on the high cheek-boned, copper-colored demons, and which came from the bottom of my heart, had possessed the weight of a grain of mustard seed, the whole Comanche nation would have soon been attending to their own torments instead of mine, in another and a hotter world.

About noon of the first day's march, the cavalcade halted, repacked the mules, roasted some venison, and after an hour's delay proceeded on the journey. At dark they again stopped for the night. When permitted to dismount, and the blindfold had been taken from my eyes, I discovered we were in a narrow ravine, a lonely and secluded spot, with high precipitous mountains rising close on either side, and near a large spring which gushed from a rock, the source

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of a considerable rivulet. The cords were here unloosed from my wrists; nevertheless, I was pinioned back from the shoulders, leaving my arms so far at liberty, however, that I could raise my hands to my mouth. The drove properly herded, one or two horses were shot, and the meat brought in for supper.

I may as well state, in this connection, that horseflesh is the favorite food of a Comanche Indian. They do devour great quantities of venison and buffalo meat, but these are universally considered as greatly inferior to the steaks cut from the carcass of a mustang. The woods and prairies are covered with wild fowl, and the streams abound with delicious trout and other fish, yet none of these are ever made use of as an article of diet.

A fire was now kindled, and the warriors gathered round it, the prisoners in the center. This was the first opportunity I had of seeing and speaking to my fellow captives. Martin was silent and dejected, apparently absorbed in his own reflections, and little disposed to converse. Stewart was nervous and frightened, bewailing his hard fate in tears; but Aikens maintained a cheerful spirit, advising us to keep up our courage and look the matter coolly in the face until the last. While conversing, the Indians were engaged boiling their meat, which they ate without any accompaniment whatever, save water dipped from the spring in buffalo horns; the greensward serving as their table spread, and their fingers as knives and forks. Having satisfied themselves, they now seemed to take into consideration the appetites of their captives.

In wandering menageries, the curiosity of civilized assemblages is sometimes excited to see "the animals fed in the presence of the audience." Something of this kind actuated the Comanches on this occasion. At all events, they re-

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solved to make their disgusting horseflesh serve the double purpose of supplying us food for the body, and themselves food for mirth. In our Indian dresses, which consisted of leggins rising only to the knee, and a short hunting coat, the upper portion of the leg, that is, above the leggin, was necessarily bare. As we sat upon the ground together, our feet tied, it was likewise necessarily exposed. When the meat designed for us had boiled until the fat began to fry and sputter, they would throw it with such marvelous dexterity from the end of their roasting sticks, that it would fall on our naked limbs hissing hot. If the laziest reader of this book will try a similar experiment on himself, he will find it admirably calculated to arouse his activity. I venture to affirm he will squirm more energetically, turn over quicker, and throw a greater amount of exercise into a given period than he ever did before in his life. It had the same effect on us, and the muscular demonstrations we made during the exhibition "brought down the house" far more uproariously than any of our previous performances during the day. It resulted in my declining supper altogether, having a prejudice against the waiters in attendance, and of raising broad blisters on my persōn, the scars of which I will carry with me to the grave.

At the conclusion of these exercises, so refreshing on one side and so painful on the other, the warriors threw themselves on the ground to sleep. They lay near each other, forming a large circle, leaving a space in the center some fifty feet in diameter. Our sleeping apartment was in this space, and we were "put to bed and tucked up" in the following original fashion: First, we were made to lie down upon our backs, with our arms and feet extended. Four stakes were then driven firmly through the sward, to which our hands and feet were fastened, holding us in such a

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position that they were as wide apart as possible. Then two other stakes were driven close on either side of the neck, and a strong strip of buffalo hide tied from one to the other, so that it passed under the chin, across the throat. Thus we lay upon our backs, unable to move head, hand, or foot.

I had now tasted nothing, save a little water, for nearly twenty-four hours, yet was not hungry; had undergone hardships rarely endured, yet was not weary; my excited imagination had driven afar off the desire for rest or for refreshment. During the long watches of the night, my brain was busied with ten thousand fancies; but through the maze and shadow of them all, I could not see the remotest prospect of deliverance. I gazed up into the sky —I could gaze nowhere else—and wondered how it was that the good God who dwelt above the stars, omnipotent as He was just, could permit such a wrong as I was suffering to be perpetrated in His sight. Thus the wretched night, without having for one moment closed my eyes, passed off. The warriors, at length, bounding to their feet and preparing with much bustling preparation to commence the adventures of another day, to end—I knew not where.

The second day of the march, about midday, we reached a wide river—(I have since learned it was the upper Río Grande, separating that portion of Mexico in which we were captured from the vague and unknown region of country distinguished on the map of northwestern Texas as the Presidio.) Here we were subjected to considerable delay. There was a large number of animals to be crossed over, besides a great amount of what they regarded, and which in fact was, valuable plunder.

At the point of the river where we reached it, was a low, long gravelly beach—a high, perpendicular rocky bluff di-

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rectly opposite—but a mile below the bluff was another gravelly beach, almost precisely similar to the one at which we had arrived, and opposite that, and below us, was likewise a high bluff, so that in crossing, it was necessary to move in a diagonal direction, as well as a long distance. The usual labor was expended, and the usual means resorted to in passing the drove, which, in consequence of the low water extending from the opposite beaches, left only the main channel, a distance, perhaps, of a hundred yards, to be swum. When it came our turn to take passage, the blindfolds were removed, and each was seated in a little buffalo-skin boat, an invention original, I believe, with the Comanche tribes, and capable of being taken apart, folded into a small compass, and carried as baggage. To the bow of these boats were hitched one end of a hair rope, the other to the tails of our mules, who safely ferried us from shore to shore.

That night we encamped at the foot of the mountain, and the whole of the next day traveled, as near as I could judge, over a steep, rough, and uneven road. During the entire trip, I was subjected to the same annoyances of being run under trees, burned with hot horseflesh, and staked down at night, as described above.

Early in the afternoon of the fourth day the warriors raised the war whoop, and afar off was heard another war whoop in reply. As we advanced, over what appeared to me a smooth plain, the answering voices grew more and more distinct, until finally the approaching parties met and intermingled. Having halted, I was taken from the mule, and when allowed the liberty of my eyes, found myself and companions standing together, in the midst of a great number of tents, and surrounded by five or six hundred men, all pushing forward to catch a glimpse of us.

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727 Some little time elapsed, when the crowd gave way, forming a passage through which advanced the leader of the war party, accompanied by an aged chief and a squaw, the latter the only one of her sex then anywhere to be seen. Having reached us, the watch was produced and handed to me, with signs indicating they wished me to exhibit its marvelous qualities.

It became me now to put forth all my histrionic powers, and to feign emotions far different from the real ones that were struggling in my bosom. My object was to take advantage of their credulity and superstition to establish among them the notion that it was a thing of life—a spiritual medium, having powers of speech—through which their chiefs and prophets, and great warriors who had gone to the land of spirits, could converse in a language perfectly intelligible to me, but utterly incomprehensible to them; to indoctrinate them into the solemn belief that my old "turnip," as I usually called it, was no less than the brother or offspring of the sun, and on such intimate and familiar terms with him, that it could foretell through me the precise moment he would reach any given point in the heavens, and that such was the unity of feeling existing between them that the short second hand of the watch, in its lesser sphere, kept corresponding pace with him as he went round and round the world. Finally, and most especially, to imbue their minds with the importance and solemnity of this one great truth, that connected as the watch and myself were, both with the visible and invisible world, any mishap that should befall either would inevitably disarrange the machinery of universal nature, break a cogwheel, or something of the sort, and send us "all to smash."

The character it became necessary for me to assume, therefore, was that of a missionary, expounding my pe-

culiar doctrines among the heathen. Accordingly, I received [727] it at their hands in an attitude of great humility, and gazed upon it with that air of reverence which may be supposed characterizes the Hindoo kneeling before the graven image of a monkey, wound it up, held it to my ear, listened to the tick, tick, tick, with a solemnity of expression intended to convey the same idea, as if I had said to them in their own language: "Gentlemen Indians, I am now receiving important telegraphic dispatches from the other side of Jordan!" Presently, it sounded the alarm. It would have been a curious and interesting picture for an artist, could he have watched the various expressions of astonishment, awe, and wonder that overspread their features during the whir and whirl and whiz of the cunning mechanism. Ejaculating their impressive "ugh, ugh," they looked seriously and inquiringly into each other's faces, as much as to say—"Well, I never; did you ever!"

Finally, the watch was taken by the old chief and for- [431] mally presented to the squaw, whom I afterwards learned was his favorite wife. The presentation speech I was unable to understand, but surmised it was very similar to those which usually accompanies the presentation of flags in more civilized communities, that is to say, an exhortation to the recipient to stand by it until the last drop of blood has been spilled, and to preserve it, under any circumstances, "sacred and inviolate." This ceremony over, I was conducted to the chief's tent, regaled with a late dinner, horse- [262] flesh being the only dish mentioned on the bill of fare, and this without the useless luxuries of salt and pepper, and *very* rare, when I was seated at the entrance, and had a brief opportunity of taking a view of the town.

This Indian village, in every material respect, was like [361] other Comanche villages with which I afterwards became

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361 acquainted, and a description of it in this place will suffice for all. It consisted, I should say, of four hundred tents, and covered a space of six or seven acres. In the center of the village was a capacious square, perhaps one acre, and in the center of the square stood a lodge, the largest in the town, being the business tent of the civil chief. Around the square the wigwams were arranged with great particularity. Leading into it on the four sides were regularly laid out streets, the tents standing in line on both sides. Those of [354] the principal men were the largest, and fronted the square; those of their inferiors, according to their rank, diminishing in size, and extending backwards.

342 The tents are constructed of prepared buffalo skins, the flesh side outward, and, from a distance, an Indian town like this, to the eye of a white man, is novel and attractive. The manner of their construction is as follows: Poles, from ten to twenty feet in length, are driven diagonally into the ground in the line of a circle, at the distance of three or four feet from each other, and at such an angle that their tops will nearly meet. These poles serve the purpose of rafters over which the buffalo hides, firmly sewed together, are drawn and fastened by stakes on the ground, thus forming an impervious cone. The door does not turn on hinges, but is simply an extra pelt, fastened at the top, with a heavy weight at the bottom, and which, when raised or turned aside sufficiently to admit an entrance within, falls directly and closely to its place. Around the outside is dug a narrow and deep ditch, rendering the floor dry and hard, [354] and the smoke of the fire, which is always kindled in the center of the wigwam, escapes through a hole at the apex.

361 These villages are always located near running water, and in thinly timbered groves, which break the force of the

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north winds in the wintry season, and in hot and sultry weather shade them from the sun.

I had remained in the chief's tent but a short time when I was again conducted to the square. There I found Aikens, Martin, and Stewart. It was soon revealed we were to "cut a conspicuous figure" in a war dance. We have among us frequent ideal representations of savage customs which are horrible enough, but the mind labors and struggles in vain to select from the wide range of our language the exact words that will properly describe an Indian war dance round a *real* captive. They came forth bedizened in their traps and feathers, their tomahawks and scalping knives in their uplifted hands, great daubs of red paint above and below their eyes, circling round and round us on a spasmodic trot, uttering their hoarse guttural songs, which seemed to flow up through their savage throats over sharp rifts of phlegm. As they proceeded, their pace, such as it was, accelerated, and their songs grew loud and louder, rising gradually from a monotonous grunt into a hideous and indescribable howl. Very often, some one of them, deserting his place, would dart towards us with his drawn hatchet threatening to brain us, while another would seize us by the hair and go through the pantomime of scalping. Thus, for two hours, they continued to sing and dance, and whoop and yell, flourishing their tomahawks and knives over us, until, at last they were compelled to stop from mere exhaustion. The captives were then separated, myself being led back to the chief's tent, where I was tied down to stakes in the manner before described. Four days had now passed without repose, but weary nature, at length, demanded rest, and I sank into a troubled sleep.

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The chief and his household—The matrimonial relation—Osolo, the Big Wolf—An Indian breakfast—The consultation—Moko, the favorite wife—The watch, once more—Mysterious assembling outside the camp—The captives stripped and bound—Preparations for the sacrifice—March of the warriors—The flint arrowheads—Scalping the prisoners—Sounding the war whoop—The torture—The desire to die—Taunting the victims—Compelled to look at the sufferers—The last act in the tragedy—Indian dogs—Return to camp—Obstinacy—Interview with Aikens—The sorrowful parting—Change of mind—Removal of the camp—Description of the country.

727 595 In the morning I was released from the uncomfortable position I had occupied during the night, allowed to sit up with only my hands tied behind my back, a change which afforded inexpressible relief. I soon comprehended the number and character of the household in which necessity had forced me to take up board and lodging for an indefinite period of time. It consisted of a tall, stout Indian, who had apparently long passed the middle age of life, and his four wives. The latter were comparatively young, none of them exceeding twenty-three or twenty-four years. The youngest was by far the most comely and graceful and evidently the favorite. Each wife, as is the Comanche custom, had her separate and distinct apartment, consisting of a small tent erected outside of, but adjoining, the husband's.

The Chief and His Household

Modern improvements have not been carried so far among them as to furnish the convenience of bells, such as are used to call waiters in our fashionable hotels, but as a substitute mine host of the wigwam had tied a deerskin cord to the corner of each of his wive's buffalo mattresses, the other end extending under the canvas into his own tent, thus rendering only a slight twitch necessary to communicate intelligence their presence was required. It was their duty to attend him, come at his call and go at his bidding, standing towards him as much in the relation of slaves as of wives.

He was the civil chief as distinguished from the war chief, and consequently the head of the tribe. This dignity carried with it the privilege of possessing four wives, a common Indian being allowed to have but one, subordinate officers two, and the war chief three. His name was Osolo, which, translated into Anglo Saxon, signifies "the Big Wolf." He had eight children, four of whom still remained in their mothers' tents, two had grown to manhood and taken wives to themselves, while two daughters had likewise left the paternal wigwam for the matrimonial lodge.

I had an opportunity now of observing their manner of preparing and partaking breakfast, which certainly was not attended with an extraordinary ceremony or display. Outside the tent, in front of the door, two logs lay side by side. Between them the fire was kindled. A long slice of horseflesh was attached to the end of a stick, some four feet in length, by which the meat was held over the fire, and when barely warmed through was brought into the tent, the handle end of the stick thrust into the ground, the long slice dangling from the other end, resembling a drooping blood-red flag. Kiln-dried corn was next boiled and mashed and served in a large dish made of bark. Breakfast was then ooo

Breakfast was then
ready, when, without more ado, each cut off a piece of meat, the size regulated by their appetites, and holding it between the fingers of one hand, with the fingers of the other scooped up the corn, filling their mouths alternately with flesh and vegetable.

An hour or two subsequently, a party of fifty, perhaps, collected together and held a council, the Big Wolf presiding. It was evident that frequent references were made to me, and that I was spoken of in connection with the watch. In the course of the consultation, Moko, the chief's favorite wife, into whose sacred keeping it had been delivered, was called. Presenting it to me, she made the usual signs, signifying, "Make it go." On this occasion I resolved to risk, for the first time, the result of a refusal. Accordingly I pointed to the heavens, uttering a rigmarole of words without sense or connection, and solemnly shook my head. If I did not impress them with the fact that such an operation, just at that time, would be attended with "the wreck of matter and the crush of worlds," it was not because of any lack of effort on my part. My success far exceeded my expectations. Instead of exhibiting any manifestations of ill humor, they quietly submitted to the disappointment, and continued their consultation.

Immediately after the council had adjourned, I discovered the warriors assembling outside the village at a point distant a quarter of a mile. I was somewhat curious to learn the occasion of it, but I little dreamed it was the prelude to an exhibition horrible beyond measure. At length, I was waited upon by a strong guard and escorted into their midst. On arriving, I found my fellow captives had preceded me, and at once comprehended some terrible scene would ensue. There were Aikens, Martin, and Stewart, stripped entirely naked, and bound as follows: Strong, high

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posts, had been driven in the ground about three feet apart. 727
Standing between them, their arms had been drawn up as far as they could reach, the right hand tied to the stake on the right side and the left hand to the stake opposite. Their feet, likewise, were tied to the posts near the ground. Martin and Stewart were thus strung up side by side. Directly in front of them, and within ten feet, was Aikens, in the same situation. A short time sufficed to divest me of my scanty Indian apparel and place me by the side of the latter, and in like condition. Thus we stood, or rather hung. Aikens and myself facing Stewart and Martin, all awaiting in tormenting suspense to learn what diabolical rite was now to be performed.

The Big Wolf and a number of his old men stationed themselves near us, when the war chief, at the head of the warriors, of whom there were probably two hundred, moved forward slowly, silently, and in single file. Their pace was peculiar and difficult to describe, half walk, half shuffle, a spasmodic, nervous motion, like the artificial motion of figures in a puppet show. Each carried in one hand his [411]
knife or tomahawk, in the other a flint stone, three inches or more in length and fashioned into the shape of a sharp pointed arrow. The head of the procession as it circled a long way round, first approached Stewart and Martin. As it passed them, two of the youngest warriors broke from the line, seized them by the hair, and scalped them, then resumed their places and moved on. This operation consists of cutting off only a portion of the skin which covers the skull, of the dimensions of a dollar, and does not necessarily destroy life, as is very generally supposed; on the contrary, I have seen men, resident on the borders of Texas, who had been scalped and yet were alive and well. In this instance, the wounds inflicted were by no means mortal; neverthe-

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less, blood flowed from them in profusion, running down over the face, and trickling from their long beards.

They passed Aikens and myself without molestation, marching round again in the same order as before. Up to this time there had been entire silence, except a yell from the two young men when in the act of scalping, but now the whole party halted a half-minute, and slapping their hands upon their mouths, united in a general and energetic war whoop. Then in silence the circuitous march was continued. When they reached Stewart and Martin the second time, the sharp flint arrowheads were brought into requisition. Each man, as he passed, with a wild screech, would brandish his tomahawk in their faces an instant, and then draw the sharp point of the stone across their bodies, not cutting deep, but penetrating the flesh just far enough to cause the blood to ooze out in great crimson gouts. By the time the line had passed, our poor suffering companions presented an awful spectacle. Still they left Aikens and myself as yet unharmed; nevertheless, we regarded it as a matter of certainty that very soon we should be subjected to similar tortures. We would have been devoutly thankful at that terrible hour—would have hailed it as a grateful privilege—could we have been permitted to choose our own mode of being put to death. How many times they circled round, halting to sound the war whoop, and going through the same demoniac exercise, I cannot tell. Suffice it to say, they persisted in the hellish work until every inch of the bodies of the unhappy men was haggled, and hacked and scarified, and covered with clotted blood. It would have been a relief to me, much more to them, could they have only died, but the object of the tormentors was to drain the fountain of their lives by slow degrees.

In the progress of their torture, there occurred an inter-

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mission of some quarter of an hour. During this period, 727
some threw themselves on the ground and lighted their pipes, others collected in little groups, all, however, laughing and shouting, and pointing their fingers at the prisoners in derision, as if taunting them as cowards and miscreants. The prisoners bore themselves differently. Stewart uttered not a word, but his sobs and groans were such as only the intensest pain and agony can wring from the human heart. On the contrary, the pitiful cries and prayers of Martin were unceasing. Constantly he was exclaiming—"Oh! God have mercy on me!" "Oh, Father in heaven pity me!" "Oh! Lord Jesus, come and put me out of pain!" and many other expressions of like character.

I hung down my head and closed my eyes to shut out from sight the heart-sickening scene before me, but this poor comfort was not vouchsafed me. They would grasp myself, as well as Aikens, by the hair, drawing our heads back violently, compelling us, however unwillingly, to stare directly at the agonized and writhing sufferers.

At the end of, perhaps, two hours, came the last act of the fearful tragedy. The warriors halted on their last round in the form of a half-circle, when two of them moved out from the center, striking into the war dance, raising the war song, advancing, receding, now moving to the right, now to the left, occupying ten minutes in proceeding as many paces. Finally, they reached the victims, for some time danced before them, as it were, the hideous dance of hell, then drew their hatchets suddenly, and sent the bright blades crashing through their skulls.

The bodies were taken down and rudely thrown aside upon the ground. What mattered it? They were at rest at last.

Aikens and myself now anticipated we would be com-

compelled to suffer the same fate, and endeavored to prepare ourselves to meet it. To our astonishment, however, we were unbound, taken in charge by separate guards, reinvested in our hunting shirts and leggins, and started towards the camp. As we moved off, I turned my head to take a last lingering look at my dead companions, and saw that the Indian dogs had already gathered round the corpses and were lapping the blood from their innumerable wounds.

Returned to the same tent from which I had been taken to witness these barbarities, and again tied hand and foot, it may well be imagined I had abundant food for reflection. My contemplations were disheartening, indeed. Fully impressed with the belief that the novelty of the watch would presently pass away, and that it was foreordained, sooner or later, I must also suffer in like manner at the stake, the prevailing thought with me was how I might reach death, yet avoid their tortures. Self-destruction became a subject upon which I meditated, long and seriously. It was, however, a subject most repugnant to my nature. Whether, at any time, I would have taken my own life, if the means to do it had been allowed me, I can hardly determine; as it was, every instrument necessary to effect such a purpose was kept wholly beyond my reach.

The more I mused on the atrocities I had seen—the more the bleeding, ghastly forms of Stewart and Martin rose before me, as they did constantly day and night, both in my waking and sleeping hours—the more bitter became my feelings towards their murderers. My bosom scorched and burned with the desire of vengeance. I luxuriated in day-dreams—became lost in the labyrinth of imagination—at one time fancying myself with an invading army come to sweep the barbarisms from the face of the earth—at another with my old companions in arms, the Texas Rangers, dash-

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ing upon them, slaughtering and slaying until they whined for mercy, like their own vile curs. 727

Indulging such moods as these, I was one day unbound and ordered to perform some menial office. Previously, however, I had determined in my heart to kill at least one or more of them the first opportunity that offered, partly to gratify my vengeance, but more especially actuated by the hope that in the melee, prompted by sudden wrath, they would dispatch me at once and save me from a lingering death at the stake. When, therefore, the cords were unfastened and I stood erect with free limbs, instead of obeying the command, I seized the first thing within my reach, [415] which happened to be a wooden pothook, and hurled it at an Indian with all my strength. Well was it for him [522] that it missed its aim. Instantly I was surrounded and borne down, but instead of producing the effect intended, the unexpected assault convulsed them with laughter. The next day, and the next, and every few days thereafter, I was unloosed and directed to skin a deer, or bring wood or water, they taking special care, in the meantime, to keep all dangerous weapons out of my reach and a sufficient number about me to prevent serious mischief. But I refused, absolutely and defiantly. On occasions, also, at this period, when the watch was brought out, I would not touch it. The life I was leading had become so inconceivably irk- [515 some—they were such a filthy and cruel race—the disgust- 364] ing camp so "smelled to heaven"—everything about me was so hopeless and so wretched that I became utterly reckless, longing only to shake off, I cared not how, at length, the heavy nightmare of existence. If, therefore, I had previously feigned the character of a humble and devout missionary with some degree of success, I now played the part of an obstinate jackass to absolute perfection.

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727 I had not seen Aikens since the day we separated at "the place of torment." What fate had befallen him was altogether unknown to me. It was, consequently, with much surprise that I saw him one day led into my tent, surrounded by a formidable guard. He was permitted to sit down beside me and an hour's time was granted, during which we were at liberty to converse.

He was far more familiar with Indian life and customs than myself, understood their signs and language better, so much more that I placed great reliance on his judgment. From him I learned that he had been kept a close prisoner in a tent on the outskirts of the village, and had experienced severer treatment than I had been subjected to—that he was now about to be carried to some distant tribe, and that this interview was allowed in order that we might have an opportunity of bidding each other farewell. No man could foresee his destiny, he said, but as for his own, there remained not a lingering doubt in his mind but that he was doomed to die by torture. He accounted for not having suffered with Stewart and Martin by saying it was not their custom to put more than two to death, in that way, at the same time; but he was convinced it was their intention to sacrifice him as soon as the tribe was reached they were now about to visit. However, not the shadow of an opportunity to escape should be lost, even though the chances against him were as ten thousand to one.

This was his judgment as regarded himself, but as to me, he was confident that with proper caution and prudence, I might eventually, through the instrumentality of the watch, be enabled to escape. He had witnessed the effect it had produced on the chiefs and warriors assembled in the square on our first arrival; and his knowledge of Indian ignorance and superstition was sufficient to teach him that

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they believed, in truth, it was a living spirit in a silver body. 727

When I recounted all that had occurred since we last separated—my refusal to wind it—my obstinacy in resisting their commands, and my attack upon the Indian when unbound, he became still more convinced. The fact they had pursued such a course towards me, which they had not towards him, was perfect evidence in his mind they intended to naturalize me, and that, so long, at least, as the watch remained in order, I need not fear death at their hands. But he advised me, by all means, to pursue an entirely different course from that lately adopted; on the contrary, to leave no effort untried to initiate myself into their favor—to cultivate their good will—to yield submission in all things, and to deceive them, if possible, into the belief that I preferred to dwell with them rather than with my own people. By pursuing this course, he represented the time would come at last when their vigilance would relax, and an opportunity of escaping safely from them would occur. We conversed of many things, past, present, and to come, losing not a moment of the precious hour. At its close, he was ordered by the guard to leave. Charging me, if ever I escaped, to communicate the intelligence of his misfortunes to his friend, Antonio Ferandez, of Corpus Christi, he bade me a sorrowful *adieu*, and passed out of the tent. I have never seen or heard of him since.

Soon after this, early one morning, I discovered the 484
squaws busily engaged taking down the tents. One after 462
another the dingy white cones came down until the whole village looked as if some sudden tempest had laid it in ruins. Every canvas, buffalo mattress, and blanket was then rolled up, the cooking kettles and the tent poles collected, and all packed firmly on the backs of a crowd of mules [492]
collected in the square. It was a busy and laborious scene,

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requiring much strength to elevate some of the packages to their place, yet it was all performed by women.

The Comanche Indian in his village is the idlest, laziest being in existence, a sluggard and a glutton. His sole and only pursuits are war and hunting. His wife, besides attending to the domestic duties of the tent, plants his corn and reaps it, cultivates his tobacco, tans his buffalo hides—in fine, performs wholly, without the remotest aid from him, every particle and kind of labor, which, among civilized beings, devolves upon the husband. So now, while the women toiled and strained and lifted, the men moped stupidly around, smoking their pipes, or lolled upon the ground.

Everything in readiness, I was once more blindfolded, mounted, and tied, when the entire town, not only its men, women, and children, but its furniture, its tents, its public and private buildings, all moved off on the backs of mules and horses. There was not left one stone upon another of that city.

Fortunately, the mule upon which I rode was led, so that I escaped the annoyance that befell me, under similar circumstances, on a previous occasion. Being deprived of the use of my eyes on the journey, except when we encamped at night, I cannot give a description of the country over which we passed, further than to say we crossed over many mountains, and that it seemed to me a wild and barren region. At the end of three days, or three "sleeps," as a [805] Comanche would express it, we reached the end of the journey. Here I found myself in a small village, of not more than twenty or thirty tents, inhabited by what appeared to be a portion of Big Wolf's tribe, on the bank of a considerable river that flowed to the southwest, and in a valley much larger than any I have before described.

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XII

The Valley of Mannasaw—Indian agriculture—The watch again—Chemakacho, the good white man—The bloody covenant—Life in a Comanche camp—Hawakakeno, the wide river—Comanche horsemanship—Dressing the buffalo skin—Indian apparel—Supreme nastiness—Marriage—The mode of burial—The accursed white man—Comanche prophets—Religion of the savages—Manner of communicating intelligence—Festival of the roasted dog—Sahonkeno, the Fox—The green corn dance—The white women—Painting the face—Return of the war party—Departure from the Valley of Mannasaw.

On our arrival, which was welcomed with no demonstrations whatever, the squaws unpacked the mules, and immediately engaged in erecting the tents, with the same assiduity they exhibited in taking them down. In a few days, though an hundred miles distant, we were, to all appearances, occupying the same village, having the same square, and the same streets—which in fact we were, save that it was located on a different spot, and contained a population numbering about two hundred more.

The valley, also, was a "counterfeit presentment" of the one we had left behind, except the stream whereon we had encamped was wider, and the mountains round about seemed to have fallen back. It was called *Mannasaw*, laying a heavy accent on the last syllable, the meaning whereof I do not know.

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727 In time I came to understand that this was the usual summer residence of the tribe, where their corn and beans and tobacco were cultivated—that it, in fact, was their main camping ground, their home, and that the other valley was only resorted to for the purpose of hunting, during those moons when the hair on the buffalo is thick and long. In the suburbs of this village were extensive specimens of Indian agriculture. The Comanche women—for the men have nothing whatever to do with it—would not be likely to receive even a "volume of the Transactions," were they to compete for the prize offered for the best system of farming at one of our state fairs. The expense of drainage and subsoil ploughing is small; nevertheless, they manage to raise respectable crops.

727 The confidence I had in the shrewdness and judgment of Aikens, and the encouragement I had received from him in our interview, inspired me with hope, and I resolved to follow his advice to the letter. My fame, evidently, had spread abroad through the new community soon after our arrival, for those I had never seen before came and gazed upon me for a long time, and then turned and walked seriously and thoughtfully away. It was not long before Moko came with a group of the new faces and presented me the watch. My obstinacy was now abandoned, and I fell again, very deep, into the mysterious mood. Winding it up and setting the alarm a minute or two ahead, I bowed my face before it—clasped it affectionately to my bosom —held it out at arm's length before me in my two hands, regarding it with that intensity of expression with which a tragedian on the stage always regards a love letter just received—turning up my eyes adoringly towards the glorious heavens—and let it whiz!

The effect was solemn and satisfactory. I felt that I had

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made "a hit"—that the sharp eyes which could detect a 727
trail so far had failed to penetrate the thin veil which covered the deception. Up to this time, and never afterwards, did they attempt to open it, or exhibit any inclination to manage it themselves; nor did any other than Moko, the youngest wife of Big Wolf, ever have it in charge.

Moreover, I now became submissive, and when untied obeyed every order that was given me. I ran to the waterside and filled the Big Wolf's buffalo horn when he was thirsty, pounded his corn when he was hungry, spread his mattress and lighted his pipe, in fine, made myself generally useful. As Aikens had predicted, their vigilance did relax to such a degree that I was permitted to wander through the village, but not beyond it—to have a knife in my possession—to sleep without being bound—and so far ingratiated myself into their confidence and esteem that they christened me *Chemakacho*—"the good white man."

This was not done, however, until after I had entered 727
into a solemn league and covenant with the chief. It was 695
a singular bond, not to be found in any book or legal forms. A stick of wood eight or ten inches long and about two inches square was produced. On its different sides were carved numerous figures representing skeletons, scalps, tomahawks and other like devices. Receiving the stick from Big Wolf, I opened a vein on the back of my hand and carefully painted the carved characters with blood. The condition of this sanguinary agreement, as it was understood, at least by the party of one part, was that I would remain in the quiet and peaceable possession of said Big Wolf, his heirs and assigns, without any attempt, design, effort, idea, or intention of running away, while he, the aforesaid Big Wolf, on his part, for and in consideration thereof, covenanted, promised, bargained, agreed, and

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727 solemnly obligated himself, in case I did, to make a skele-
675 ton of me in the shortest possible space of time, according to the Indian statutes in such case made and provided.

727 Though closely observed, and confined within certain limits, like one out on bail in the old times of imprisonment for debt, I now enjoyed comparative freedom; and as day after day and week after week passed wearily away, had opportunities of observing their habits, customs, and peculiarities, and to become thoroughly conversant with life in a Comanche camp.

727 As before stated, the sole business of the male portion
701 of the tribe was war and hunting. While in camp the Indian is idle, listless, sleeping the greater part of the day and all night. He is slovenly in his dress, except when he meets in council or goes on the war path, when he decorates himself with the scalps he has taken, which at other
727 times hang in his tent. His prowess as a warrior is estimated
701 in proportion to the number he possesses.
554 The most renowned brave in the camp of the Big Wolf—he who could boast the possession of the greatest number of these trophies—was *Hawakakeno*, the Wide River. He was, indeed, a brawny and powerful savage, terrible in battle and quarrelsome in the village. He was feared as well as admired; his word was law among his weaker brethren, and none of all his tribe could stand before him in single contest.

224 To supply the necessaries of life, more or less are con-
492 strained daily to go out upon the hunt. In this, their only labor, they range within a circuit rarely extending more than four or five miles from the town. Their weapons, on these excursions, are the bow and arrow and the lance, both of which they use with great dexterity and skill, especially on horseback. Indeed, in the matter of horsemanship, I

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Dressing the Buffalo Skin

doubt whether there is a race on the face of the whole earth that equals the Comanches. They will lie along the sides of their horses, while under full speed, directing their course at the same time and discharging arrows from under their necks with deadly effect, in a manner astonishing to witness.

If a deer is captured, he brings it in on his horse, throws it to the women whose business is to dress and cook it. If he kills a mustang or a buffalo, he rides into the village and informs his squaw where the carcass may be found, who straightway mounts and goes out in search of it—skins it —cuts the flesh into strips, and returns.

While the men are thus indolent, the women are remarkable for their industry. Besides attending to the menial duties of the camp, working in the fields during the planting and harvesting seasons, they perform extraordinary labors in preparing buffalo hides and bringing them into the soft and pliant condition in which we see them. To do this properly requires about six weeks, and the process may be new to many of my readers.

When the hide is first brought in green, it is placed upon a log so hewed that it presents a flat surface, perhaps a foot in width. With an instrument similar to a common adze, the squaws cut away all the flesh and part of the bulkiest portions of the hide, until the whole presents a uniform thickness. This is a long and tedious operation. They are then stretched upon frames, and rubbed with a kind of pumice stone until the surface becomes furzy. If it should dry in this state, however, it would be hard, stiff and unpliant. To avoid this, they use a preparation composed of basswood bark pounded very fine and mixed with the brains of the deer or buffalo, which is applied day after day until the skin is thoroughly saturated, when it is soft and flexible.

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439 The buffalo robe is the principal, and indeed, so far as I know, their only article of commerce—their only source of wealth. At a certain season every year they are transported to the confines of Mexico, and sold to parties of Mexican traders who annually meet them there, and receive in compensation hatchets, knives, and such other implements as are used by them, together with cheap calicoes, mescal, and a great variety of trinkets.

291 It has previously been stated that the men dress in buckskin. The women do likewise, to a great extent, but most of them wear a sort of short gown made of the calico thus obtained. Children, until they arrive at the age of eight or nine, do not take the trouble to dress in anything.

515 In their personal habits they are supremely nasty. Occasionally, in warm weather, they bathe in the river, but daily ablutions are not thought of, so that they are constantly covered with dirt and vermin.

582 The institution of marriage is recognized, and governed by established laws. When a young man becomes enamored and resolves to take a wife, he presents himself before the council and makes known his desire. If there are no objections on the part of the maiden or her parents, the council decrees that they may live together in the matrimonial relation one moon. If, at the end of that time, there has arisen no dissension between them, and they are mutually satisfied, they are permitted to continue the relation another moon, and if they live together harmoniously through that, the knot is irrevocably tied. The system of matrimony among them, therefore, seems to be founded on the principle of the rule of three.

764 Equally peculiar is their mode of burial. When a warrior dies, his body is carried out and laid upon the ground, his head always toward the west. A pen is then built up around

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him constructed of poles. Into this enclosure is placed his 764
personal effects—his saddle and bridle, his tomahawk, scalping knife, bow and arrows and lance, all the inanimate property he possesses. The enclosure is then roofed with bark and covered with earth. This part of the burial ceremony concluded, all his horses and mules, even if he was the owner of a hundred, are brought to the grave and killed. When a squaw dies, her property, also—her calico gown, cooking kettle, tools for dressing skins—are buried with her, and the horse upon which she was accustomed to ride slain in the same manner.

They are buried with their heads to the west, because 764
they believe at the resurrection, of which they have vague 775
and indefinite notions, they will arise and march eastward, again to take possession of all the country from which the accursed white man has driven them and their fathers. They bury their property with them and kill their horses because they suppose their souls will have need of them in the other world.

Among them are prophets, corresponding with our di- 793
vines, who maintain with exceeding strictness their sacer- 721
dotal dignity. The prophet addresses them on various occasions, such as the green corn dance, and the festival of the roasted dog, but especially in the time of the new moon. At all times they listen to him with the most profound reverence, their heads hanging down, and not a murmur of sound among them from the commencement of his exhortation to its close; but in the season of the new moon, they fall on their faces to the earth before him, and there remain still and motionless until the sound of his voice has ceased.

They believe in God, a great spirit, who created and gov- 775
erns the earth, sun, moon, and stars. They have an unwaver-

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775 ing and undoubting faith in a future state of existence, and in future rewards and punishments. They hold that the soul of the wicked coward or thief, after death, will be driven before the frown of the Great Spirit, afar off into a region barren and cold and desolate, there to wander forever through thorns and among rocks, thirsty, hungry, and in pain; but the good Indian, who has been brave in battle and walked uprightly among his tribe, will be translated to a valley ten thousand times ten thousand fold longer and wider than their own valley of Mannasaw, where the climate is always mild as it is in the moon of plants; where there is cool water, and pounded corn and mustang meat forever at his hand, and where buffalo and deer abound, and the horses are fleeter than the wind.

[173] They have many traditions but no records; nevertheless, 212 they have certain hieroglyphics by which they contrive to communicate intelligence with as much accuracy as if they understood the epistolary art. For instance, if one party goes out before another has returned, and wishes to convey information of the course they have taken and the business they are upon, they will seek some point where it is probable their trail will be discovered. Here, providing themselves with a thin piece of birch bark, which can be folded in the form of a letter without breaking, they will make such figures and emblems upon it as represent the idea they wish to convey. If they are on the war path, the character will be a tomahawk and a scalp; if on a visit to a friendly tribe, it will be a pipe; if on a buffalo or deer hunt, there will be no characters, but the folded bark will simply enclose some of the hair of the animal of which they are 212 in pursuit. If they intend to be absent a month, the emblem 201 will be the full moon; if two weeks, a half-moon, if only a few days, the new moon. Then they strike a hatchet deep

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into the trunk of a tree, and withdrawing it, place the end of the bark epistle in the incision, the outer end pointing in the direction they have taken. It will be seen they measure time by the changes of the moon. In the new, they give themselves up to devotional contemplation and worship, rendering thanks unto the Great Spirit that although the old one has gone, another has been permitted to take its place. Every change is attended with some peculiar ceremony; but when it is in the full, occurs the festival of the roasted dog. With the exception of the refreshments, it differs but very slightly from a modern picnic. The squaws go out to a spring in some pleasant and shady spot, taking with them a number of curs, which have been fattened for the occasion, and kindling a fire, butcher and roast them. By this time the warriors approach, when, seating themselves promiscuously on the grass, they speedily strip the canine bones admidst much fun and laughter. On these occasions, while I was with them, Sahonkeno, the Fox—a lively and mischievous rascal—was always the life of the party.

Not long after my arrival in the valley of Mannasaw, took place the first exhibition I had witnessed of the green corn dance. This occurs in the latter part of July, or the hot moon. The day previous to the festival, a general meeting of the whole tribe was held in the square of the village. In the center stood the prophet, *Karolo*, signifying, as near as I was ever able to comprehend, a star, or planet; immediately around him, in a circle, were gathered the chiefs and principal men, seated on the ground; behind these were the warriors, and in the rear the women and children.

Karolo, the prophet, addressed them long and earnestly, and made many gestures. Though I could not understand his language, I knew from his manner and the intonations

of his voice that the sentiments to which he gave expression came from the inmost depth of his heart. So near as I was able to comprehend, he was commenting on the wonderful goodness of the Great Spirit who gave them green corn in its season, and exhorting them to thankfulness for the same.

The next day, outside the village, numerous fires were kindled at short distances from each other round a large circle, which included between one and two acres. Each family had its separate fire, and by each fire was a quantity of green corn, piled on a buffalo skin. When the squaws had roasted it, the prophet, the civil and war chiefs, and a few others took a position in the center of the circle, while the tribe, numbering some six hundred, ranged themselves outside the fires, and the dance began. Round and round they went, singing their green corn song, which sounded in my ears like the perpetual repetition of "*ahow, aho, aho ahow*," keeping time to rude specimens of music hammered out of a dry skin drawn over a hoop, and extracted from a quick and violent collision of buffalo bones—a performance similar to that common among Negro minstrels. Finally, they huddled together on the south side of the circle, and sat down. Karolo addressed them briefly, and was followed in a few remarks by the chiefs. The prophet then walked around the circle, raising his hands above the separate piles of roasted corn as he passed them, talking all the while, as if invoking a blessing, and having made the circuit, the tribe gathered in distinct squads about the several fires and commenced eating. When the roasted ears were shelled to the last kernel, the festival of the green corn dance was over, and they went back, singing, to the town.

It is a custom among them to paint their faces daily. I was compelled, every morning, while with them, to pursue this practice—to anoint my features with a preparation

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composed chiefly of a peculiar kind of clay—so that it would 727
be difficult for a stranger to distinguish me from one of their 302
own number. As I became more and more acquainted with those who inhabited the little village we had joined, I observed four girls, the youngest twelve, and the oldest, perhaps, eighteen, whose appearance attracted my attention. They had the copper-colored complexion, but not the high cheek bones and the course black hair and the peculiar expression of countenance that always distinguish the aborigines. On the other hand, they possessed the Anglo-Saxon face—their gait was different from that of the other women of the tribe—and what was the most extraordinary, they had fine light hair, inclined to auburn, and upon one of them it curled. They were a mystery to me, until one day I saw the women coming from the river where they had gone to bathe, and walking among them were these four, perfectly white. The paint had been washed from their faces in the water, revealing to me their race. I made assiduous inquiries of Big Wolf and others, and of themselves, but could obtain no satisfactory information. They knew no other than the language of the Comanches, and in all respects conformed to their manners and customs. It was, therefore, evident to me they had been captured in early childhood and remembered no other life than that they were then leading.

More or less of the tribe were almost constantly absent 721
on the war path. Sometimes they would sally forth of their own motion; at others, a number of them would join a party from a different village happening to pass that way. Even- 727
tually they returned, and the manner of their approach indicated whether they had been successful, or the reverse. On one occasion, during the summer, they brought in a captive, blindfolded as I had been, and had a rousing war-

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dance over him in the square. I longed for the privilege of speaking to him, but it was denied. The morning following his advent, he was tied on a mule, his face covered with buckskin, and escorted from the camp. I never could gain the least information from whence he came, or whither he was taken; but suppose he had been captured by a party belonging to another village, who simply halted at our encampment overnight, and got up the war dance by way of entertainment.

We were frequently visited by the chiefs and warriors of the surrounding tribes. They were, invariably, cordially welcomed and hospitably entertained. Then there was a pipe dance, which is the dance of love and friendship. They were invited to repose on the largest buffalo skins, and given to eat the flesh of a roasted dog, though the moon was not in the full—a luxury surpassing even the meat of the wild horse. I apprehend many were attracted to our camp through curiosity to see and hear the wonderful watch, the fame thereof, beyond question, having spread far and near. I come to this conclusion from the fact that speedily following their arrival, Moko would bring it forth, and call on me to make it talk.

There was one visitor, in particular, a stout, surly chief, who in the course of the summer visited our camp many times. He appeared to have become fascinated with the watch, never growing weary of listening to the alarm. After Moko had finally placed it affectionately in her bosom, he would have long and earnest interviews with Big Wolf, the subject of their conversation being, as was easy to perceive, the mysterious watch. I learned that he was the chief of a tribe whose village was situated in a valley beyond the mountains at the distance of two days' journey, and that he was known as the Spotted Leopard.

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Departure from the Valley of Mannasaw

Lounging about the camp, I now led a monotonous and weary life until about November, or, at least, until after the season of buffalo hunting had arrived, when I was ordered, unexpectedly, one morning, to mount a mule, and riding forth from the camp, accompanied by Big Wolf and half a dozen of his warriors, I left behind me forever the beautiful valley of Mannasaw. 727 [22]

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XIII

The journey beyond the mountains—Capturing a bear—The night encampment—Entrance into the valley of Lescoha—The dashing escort—Camp of the Spotted Leopard—Another war dance—No change of programme—The bargain and sale—Renewal of the bloody covenant—Value of a captive—Arrival of Moko with the watch—Attempt to escape—Cutting the knee cord—Buffalo hunting—Battle with the Apaches—Meeting of Rolling Thunder and Spotted Leopard—Hanging by the heels—The arrival of the white women captives.

On this journey I was neither tied or blindfolded, but rode a bridled mule, while the warriors were mounted on their best horses. They usually kept me in advance of them, directing me when to turn to the right and left. We followed a well-beaten trail that led in a northwest direction. On reaching the head of the valley, we turned to the left, and began the ascent of a wide, low range of mountains, winding in and out of narrow passes and defiles, but still gradually ascending, traveling in this manner some twenty miles before reaching the summit. The descent on the opposite side was of equal extent.

The ravines were overgrown with dwarfish trees, and the adjacent mountains in general were rocky, but occasionally between the ridges that rose in succession one above the other were small, level plats, covered with a heavy growth of grass, upon which buffalo, deer, and antelopes were feeding.

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The Night Encampment

While crossing one of these little prairies, we espied a 224
bear making his way to the mountain. A part of the Indian's equipage is a *lasso*, tied to his saddle girth, and in the skill and accuracy with which they throw it, they far excel the Mexicans. On this occasion it was brought into use. A couple of them galloped out, one dexterously throwing the noose over Bruin's neck and twitching him on his back, the other as dexterously throwing another over his hind legs, thus subjecting him to a most uncomfortable stretch, as they pulled in opposite directions. A scalping knife soon relieved him of his hide, and a portion of his carcass supplied our evening meal. Bear's flesh is often eaten by them, but is not regarded as equal to buffalo, beef, or venison. They are hunted considerably, however, for their oil, which [281]
is used in the preparation of various kinds of skins.

Having descended the western slope of the mountain range, we encamped that night at the extreme point of a narrow valley, which seemed to run up a long distance between the hills. Wearied with a hard day's travel, I hastened 727
to cook my own and Big Wolf's supper—for I was com- 264
pelled to act towards him in the capacity of a servant—and then lay down to rest. Though I brought his water, and cooked his food, and slept in his tent, and was in fact, his menial and slave, Big Wolf never, in a single instance, placed the horn of water to his lips or put a morsel of flesh into his mouth until I had tasted them. This, also, was the case with the two chiefs to whom I subsequently belonged. Whether it was through fear of poison, or dictated by some singular superstition, is more than I am able to determine.

Setting out again early in the morning, we traveled down 000
the little winding valley until it opened into an extensive plain. Here we struck a narrow but very rapid stream, when

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turning to the right, round the point of a high bluff we rode along its banks, discovering as we advanced broken patches of prairie where it was evident some tribe had grown its last year's corn. The valley is called, in the Indian [103] tongue, *Lescoha*, and the stream, which we were following towards its source, *Boge Lescoha*.

574 In the afternoon we came in sight of a large town situated directly at the foot of a mountain which bounded the plain on its northern side. A mile outside we were met by a party of eight or ten, who approached us on a dashing gallop and escorted us in. When we had reached the square, the same surly chief who had so often visited Big Wolf to listen to the voice of that wonderful thing which Moko carried in her bosom came forward and bade us welcome. Then I knew we were in the camp of the Spotted Leopard.

361 The village was built on both sides of the Boge Lescoha, which had its source in a large spring under the mountain, not far distant. It divided the town in the center, the civil chief's tent being on one side and the war chief's on the other.

727 A short half-hour only had passed, when the horn sounded 535 the war dance. I was conducted to the center somewhat nervous and apprehensive—the apparitions of Martin and Stewart flitting before my mental vision—nevertheless, there remained an inward confidence I would not be put to death, because I had kept the covenant. While in this state of perplexity, the warriors were issuing from their tents, whither they had gone when the horn sounded, to gird on their belts, and decorate themselves with such scalps as they possessed, and were assembling round me. The signal given, the dance began, and was conducted in the usual manner, such as I have before attempted to describe, but which the reader must see before he can fully

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understand. It was brief—unusually so—and terminated without any damage, very much to my relief. 727 635

After the ceremony, I was conducted to the tent of one of the Spotted Leopard's wives, of whom he also had four. This was especially appropriated to the accommodation of Big Wolf, and inasmuch as I had always slept in the same tent with him at home, he did not think proper to alter the programme on this occasion. 727 574

In the morning, a large number of mules and horses were collected in the square, driven in from the surrounding pasture by the women. Piles of buffalo, deer, and beaver skins, also, were brought from the tents and packed on mules. I was then brought out by Big Wolf, who produced the bloody stick and delivered it to the Spotted Leopard, at the same time informing me I had been sold and assigned. To render the transfer legal, however, it became incumbent on me to reopen the vein on the back of my hand, and again stain the carved figures with blood, an act which, in view of the alternative of being butchered, I performed with great alacrity. This formality closed the bargain, when Big Wolf and his warriors departed, taking with them the avails of the sale. In this business transaction, I had the satisfaction of learning how much, in Indian estimation, I was worth, to wit: 120 animals, old and young, of the horse kind, and as many skins as three pack mules could carry. 727 425 [435]

From the first I entertained an inveterate dislike of the Spotted Leopard. He was morose, reserved, unsocial, and there was a malignant expression about his mouth and eyes that told me as plainly as if it had been written in emphatic English on his forehead that he was a being who would delight in cruelty. These were my first impressions of him, and I never had occasion to modify them afterwards. But 727 622

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among his wives, there was one who treated me with all the kindness I had previously received at the hands of Moko, the young consort of the Big Wolf, and she was *Kianceta*, the Weasel.

At the end of four days, Big Wolf again made his appearance, attended by his four wives and a number of warriors. Their arrival was celebrated by a pipe dance. This ceremony was conducted as follows: The wives of the two chiefs, myself, and several old men of the tribe were stationed in the center of the ring. At its side stood the Spotted Leopard, with a lighted pipe made of red sandstone. As the warriors danced around, each, as he came opposite the chief, received the pipe at his hands, took a whiff or two, and handed it back. This ceremony was accompanied by one of their wild and peculiar songs, and when it was concluded, Moko came forward with the watch, kissed it, presented it to me, and turning about, broke through the circle of warriors, crying, and disappeared in a neighboring tent.

I caused it to sound the alarm, probably a dozen times, when the Spotted Leopard approached me with Kianceta by his side. Into the possession of the latter, the weird, mysterious thing, through which the Great Spirit spoke in a strange voice, was delivered, and the crowd dispersed.

Kianceta, the Weasel, was tall and slim, and erect as the young cedar that grew on the bank of the Boge Lescoha. She had an easy and elastic gait, as if shod with velvet springs, and in her movements there was a nameless grace and dignity which drew all eyes after her, as the magnet attracts the steel. She was dressed in buckskin moccasins, and leggins colored red—a blue broadcloth skirt, tastefully embroidered with beads, and over this a bright calico short gown—articles obtained from the Mexican traders. Her long hair, blacker than the feathers of the crow, fell down

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over her shoulders in luxuriant profusion, halfway to the ground, and around her forehead was a tin band, scalloped on the upper edge, after the fashion of a crown.

Kianceta was indeed comely to look upon, but her soul was far more lovely than her form. Though an untutored woman of the prairie—one of a low and ignorant class—I have reason to remember her with respect and gratitude. She sympathized with the poor captive when others laughed at his calamities—sat down by his side, and looked up sorrowfully into his face, when the young savages in the village beat him with stones and sticks until he sought shelter in the tent. An hundred times she stood between him and those who threatened harm—gave him corn when others had it not—attended him when sick—casting red-hot stones into a trough of water to make him a steam bath, and wrapping him in thick buffalo skins until his cold was broken up and his health restored.

Next morning the tribe was assembled, and Che-ra-se-chick-a-lo, the prophet, made a speech. He was not as earnest and impressive as Karolo—palpably inferior in every respect—nevertheless, he was listened to with the most profound attention. At the conclusion of his exhortation, they indulged in a long and jolly feast, when Moko and the three other wives of Big Wolf came and kissed me again and again, and then bestriding their mules, rode away towards their own valley of Mannasaw, weeping as they went.

My time was now passed either in attending upon the Spotted Leopard, or sauntering idly through the village, continually thinking of escape. This subject was never out of my mind. By observing the rising and setting sun, I could tell the points of compass, and recalling, as far as possible, the direction of the different routes I had taken

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coo in my progress hither, made up my mind as to the course which would lead most directly to the white settlements. About half a mile from the camp was a deep, thickly timbered ravine, running back apparently a long distance among the mountains. I had been out to the entrance of this ravine with the chief in one of his rambles, and it occurred to me if I could manage to slip away from the camp unperceived, and get into it, escape was possible. Many a night my eyes were not closed in sleep, studying and musing over the plan. During the day I was constantly gazing toward the defile—some indefinable but powerful attraction turning my face thitherward.

Finally my plan was perfected—which was to steal away from the village in the night, trusting to travel many miles on the journey before the chief would awake. At length, after patient watching, the favorable moment, as I supposed, arrived. I was permitted at this time to carry a knife, and providing myself with some strips of venison, about twelve o'clock one night, when the chief was lost in deep slumber and the camp was silent, crawled softly from the tent and was about to make my way from the village and fly across the plain, when I was startled by the growl of a big dog, that confronted me, showing his white teeth. Presently he was joined by another, and another, until I found myself surrounded. Their growls awakened all the other curs, with which an Indian town is invariably overrun, and instantly a universal snarling and barking was heard from one end to the other of the camp. The disturbed women and warriors shouted to them, in a half-sleeping, half-waking state, to be still and lie down. Under these circumstances, further advance was useless, and I made my way back into the tent, as speedily and stealthily as the nature of my situation allowed, having in the meantime avoided observation.

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Attempt to Escape

Though disappointed beyond measure, I was by no means so far discouraged as to abandon the enterprise, but determined still more firmly to avail myself of the first opportunity that occurred to put it into execution.

My orders were not to go beyond the boundaries of the village. However, as their watchfulness over me became less and less strict, I so far disregarded them, occasionally, as to wander a short way down the creek, or out to a little grove some rods from the village—at times being told by anyone who chose to exercise the authority, to go back; at others, left to return at leisure. This practice I kept up, until finally it became almost unnoticed. Emboldened by their increasing indifference, just at dusk one evening, at that point of obscurity between light and darkness when objects may be seen at some distance on the plain, but when it is difficult to distinguish between a man and an animal, I started off at a slow, careless pace towards the mouth of the ravine. Having proceeded, perhaps, a hundred rods, and when about to make a trial of my speed, I saw three warriors in advance, approaching me directly. I happened, at this moment to be near a cluster of bushes, and taking out my knife commenced cutting a forked stick, designing to deceive them into the belief that my business there was to obtain such an article for the purpose of more conveniently cooking the Spotted Leopard's meat; but my movements, especially at that hour, were too suspicious, and they were, evidently, not to be deceived.

Taking me by the arm, they led me back into camp, and on arriving there, called the chief one side and had a lengthened interview with him. At its close the chief pointed me into his tent, where I was tied down to stakes, on my back, in the same manner I had been bound when

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727 first carried away into captivity. This, I supposed, was the extent of the penalty I was doomed to suffer, but a short time taught me I was sorely and painfully mistaken. The Spotted Leopard, drawing down my leggin, with the coolness of the most practised surgeon, drew the edge of his knife across the cartilage or tendon just below the kneepan of my right leg. The muscle was not entirely severed, as was evidently his intention. The object of this surgical operation was to cripple me in such manner as to render escape impossible, even should a favorable opportunity present itself. For two weeks I was kept tied down, the chief frequently, during that time, bending the leg back and forth, each time breaking open the wound afresh. Eventually, however, I was unbound, and the wound permitted to heal, leaving a formidable cicatrice, and rendering the limb extremely stiff, not to such a degree, however, as it was his purpose to make it.

224 In the winter following, some 250 of the warriors, armed
727 with bows and arrows, lances, tomahawks, and knives, set
492 out on their annual grand buffalo hunt. They were mounted on their choice horses, while I, who accompanied the chief as his servant, rode, unarmed, a dilapidated mule.

224 It is only in the cold months that the skin of the buffalo has any value for the purposes of traffic. Then, only, is it covered with wool, being, in the warm summer weather, with the exception of a tuft of mane, entirely bare. During the latter period they are only killed as the necessity of food requires—their skins then being used for the construction of tents.

224 On these annual excursions, they are followed by a large
492 number of mules that not only carry out their buffalo-hunting tents, which simply consist of one or more skins,

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thrown over a pole resting on crossed stakes—but also bring back the hides they may succeed in taking. 224 492

On the occasion I now refer to, the party moved west, threading their winding way over the mountains, and across numerous streams and valleys of greater or less width and extent. In the afternoon of the third day we struck a wide, rolling prairie. Dividing it nearly in the center was a high, smooth ridge—its summit reached from both sides by an easy, gradual ascent. As we crossed the prairie and approached this ridge, our scattered cavalcade extended, perhaps, a quarter of a mile, moving forward carelessly, and in no order whatever. I was at the extreme rear, by the side of the Spotted Leopard, and surrounded by the pack mules. As the foremost horsemen reached the height, they halted suddenly, making hurried signs, while two or three of the braves galloped back down the slope, riding eagerly to and fro among their brethren, as if urging them to push forward without delay. The whole band, thereupon, dashed up the hill, except the Spotted Leopard and myself, who remained with the mules in the rear, and on reaching the summit deployed into line. By this time I had heard the cry of "the Apaches, the Apaches," and knew at once there was hot work at hand.

224

726

As yet, however, I had seen nothing of an enemy, and only drew the inference there was one present from the cries I had heard, and the general commotion that prevailed. In the course of two or three minutes after our line formed on the ridge, the air was rent with the noise of the war whoop, and up the opposite ascent, at full speed, came the Apaches in solid body, like a black cloud. As they approached, a shower of arrows were discharged from both lines, when they rushed upon each other in a hand-to-hand encounter.

Three Years Among the Comanches

726 From the position I occupied I had a fair, unobstructed view of the battle. It was fierce and terrible. The horses reared, and plunged, and fell upon each other, their riders dealing blow for blow, and thrust for thrust, some falling from their saddles to the ground, and others trampling madly over them.

The Comanches outnumbered the enemy; nevertheless, they were forced to retreat, falling back down the hill almost to my position; but still they were not pursued, the Apaches appearing to be content to hold possession of the ground. Soon, the tribe of the Spotted Leopard again rallied and dashed once more to the attack. If possible, this contest was severer, as it was longer than the first. Again the fierce blow was given and returned; again horses and men intermingled in the melee—stumbled, fell, and rolled upon the ground, while the wide heavens resounded with their hideous shrieks and cries.

My blood thrilled through my veins as I looked upon the scene. I had mingled in encounters fierce even as that, but never before in the midst of the hottest fight was I overcome with such a sense of terror. To be an inactive spectator of a battle is far more painful than to be a participator in it.

I hoped devoutly during the engagement that the Comanches would be beaten, being impressed with the belief that if I should fall into the enemies' hands, my chances of escape would be increased, for I had often heard that the Apaches, though a most warlike nation, were more merciful to prisoners than others of their race. But in this
727 I was disappointed. The Apaches at length gave way, disappearing beyond the ridge. Instead of pursuing their advantage, however, the Comanches hastily gathered up their dead and retreated towards the mountains we had crossed.

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Battle with the Apaches

As soon as they had left the ground, the Apaches again 727
appeared upon the height, and bore away their dead also. It was a drawn battle.

This encounter was unexpected on both sides. The Apaches, as I learned, were gathered around a spring, cooking their meat, little expecting the approach of an enemy, when the van of our party came upon them. At that time a deadly strife existed between the tribes, and it would have been a scandalous violation of an Indian's idea of manhood to have separated, under such circumstances, without a bloody tilt at arms.

The Comanches lost in this battle seventeen warriors; the Apaches, probably as many more. Had the combatants belonged to a civilized people who keep a record of their wars, it would have furnished a thrilling page of history; but thousands of such sanguinary struggles take place on the lonely prairies of which the world knows not. That same season, however, they buried the tomahawk and danced the pipe dance, and henceforward were at peace.

The close of this eventful day was occupied in burying 727
the slain, which ceremony was performed in their custom- 764
ary manner, except they seemed to chant the death song 775
with more energy and feeling than on ordinary occasions. With them, death, at any time, even the nearest and dearest of their kindred, is not regarded as an event to be deplored, but on the contrary, to be welcomed with rejoicing; but when a warrior dies on the field of battle, their joy and exultation knows no bounds, for their crude theology assures them his departed spirit is, at once, caught up by the Great Spirit, and borne to the region of everlasting and supreme felicity.

We saw no more of the Apaches, and the following day 224
turned our course up the prairie—crossed the mountains

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224 into a still wider prairie—and there, at a watering place, pitched our camp. Here we remained two months, meeting with unanticipated success. Thousands and thousands of buffalo, in immense droves, were roving over the plain, and it was an easy task to obtain as many hides as the mules could carry home.

484 574 622 On the return, which was by a different route from that we came, we fell in with a party of two or three hundred, a friendly tribe, who accompanied us back to the camp. Their [551] chief was Kan-sa-le-um-ko, the Rolling Thunder. He was agreeable, though sedate—a compound of benign dignity and solemnity—a chief who plainly preferred falling on his face before the prophet, in the time of the new moon, to dancing the war dance with the warriors.

574 The Rolling Thunder and his tribe remained with us a week, and it was, indeed, a week of carnival and merriment. First of all was the war dance, and then followed the solemn discourses of Che-ra-se-chick-a-lo, the prophet, and after them came the ring dance and the pipe dance, and the feast of the roasted dog. During these entertainments, the good Kianceta and myself played a conspicuous part in the exhibition of the watch. As on all former occasions, it captivated the simple children of nature, and particularly the [622] Rolling Thunder, whose reverent temperament led him to refer all mysteries, whether great or small, to the wonder-working power of the Great Spirit.

574 729 Soon after the departure of Rolling Thunder and his people came another large party and pitched their hunting tents on the bank of the stream, outside the town. The day following their arrival, I observed our warriors, belted, and decorated with trinkets and scalps, moving towards their encampment. Something unusual, I felt confident, was about to take place. Distant but a quarter of a mile, I

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could hear distinctly the sound of their voices singing their savage songs. Presently, came thrilling through the air, mingling with the loud, shrill war whoop, a shriek of mortal agony. Again and again it was repeated, growing fainter and fainter, until, finally, it ceased, or, at least, failed to reach my ears.

At length, a party of six or seven came after me. While passing through the strange encampment, I discovered pieces of soldier's clothing, which I recognized at once as the United States uniform. Moving on beyond the camp into a grove, a spectacle presented itself that froze my blood with horror. A white man had been subjected to the torture. He was not lashed to stakes as Stewart and Martin were, but a sharp stick had been thrust through his heel cords, by which he was suspended from a limb, with his head downward, as a butcher suspends a carcass in the shambles.

He, also, had been sacrificed with the accursed flints, his ears cut off, and tongue drawn out. A slight convulsive shrug of the shoulders, indicated that life was not wholly extinct. I gazed upon him in silence and terror and was relieved when they led me away. I concluded, from what I saw in their camp, he was a United States soldier, captured, probably, near one of the frontier outposts—such exploits not being unusual, numbers having been taken during my early residence in Texas, as far down as Fort Jesup in Louisiana.

The Indian policy of the United States, I am convinced, is not the most advisable one. So long as it is continued, the frontier settlements will be constantly exposed to depredations, and prisoners subjected to the horrid cruelties I have described. They cherish an inveterate and undying hatred of the white race, whom they regard as usurpers—

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and are sanguine in the belief that the time will eventually arrive when they will be enabled, with the assistance of the Great Spirit, to sweep them from existence and reclaim their rightful inheritance. In their ignorance, they compare, favorably for themselves, their feeble strength with the whole power of the United States.

It would be cheaper for the government, in the end, instead of maintaining a line of military posts on the frontier—standing merely on the defensive—to send an army through their territories, giving them ocular demonstrations of its power, arresting their turbulent chiefs, and teaching them a lesson too impressive to be forgotten, that the rights of a citizen of the United States shall not be violated with impunity. Hundreds of our people, in the pursuit of their lawful business, are captured yearly, enslaved, and barbarously put to death, without attracting the attention of government, whereas if the hundredth part of the same outrages were committed by any enlightened nation, it would call upon the people to fly to arms. For my own part, I do not see why the arm of authority should not be stretched forth to protect the outraged citizen at the headwaters of the Guadaloupe with the same promptness it is to protect him in Paraguay, or on the Gulf of Mexico.

The camp of the Spotted Leopard, as has previously been seen, was situated at the source of the Boge Lescoha, at the foot of a mountain range. Fifty miles south, at the other extremity of the valley, were his planting grounds, where a small village had been constructed, and where a number of the tribe, principally squaws, usually remained.

I had been here several months when a party arrived from the plantation, among whom I observed were three white women, notwithstanding their faces were painted.

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The White Women

The contour of their features, and especially their red hair, 727
indicated the race to which they belonged, beyond mistake.
At the next festival of the full moon, where all, bond and [796]
free, were permitted to mingle and converse, I found, to
my surprise, they could speak English. It was the first time
since my capture that I had heard the accents of my native
tongue. The oldest woman had passed the age of sixty, and
her name was Mrs. Marietta Haskins. The two younger
were her daughters, the oldest, Margaret, perhaps, twenty-
one, the other, Harriet, three years her junior. They ap-
peared to be persons who had been brought up in humble
circumstances, though possessing a fair share of intelli-
gence. The following is, substantially, the version of their
story.

They were natives of one of the midland counties of 000
England, where they occupied an obscure, though com-
fortable position in life. While thus situated, happy and
contented with their lot, there came into the vicinity of
their residence, one of the Latter-Day Saints, preaching
and expounding the Mormon doctrines. His arguments
were so ingenious—his appeals so eloquent and earnest—
his description of the valley of the Great Salt Lake so
glowing that many of the poor people listened and were
converted. He represented the climate as more salubrious
—the soil more fertile—the scenery more delicious than in
any other region of the world. He portrayed, in fascinating
colors, the life of ease and luxury the poorest thrall in
England might lead in that favored land—where wild herds,
the common property of all, darkened a thousand hills,
and the bountiful earth yielded its fruits without toil.

The fortunate inhabitants of this paradise he pictured as
basking in the full fruition of the highest earthly happiness.
Discarding the false, domestic notions to which the wicked

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and perverse generation around them still clung, they followed the examples of Solomon and the patriarchs of old. They were, he declared, the elect people of God—members of the true church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints—founded on the revelations contained in the Book of Mormon—delivered unto mankind through the instrumentality of Joseph Smith; and since that great Prophet had suffered death for righteousness' sake, his mantle had descended upon a faithful apostle, Brigham Young, a perfect and upright man.

Seduced into fanaticism, many gathered together their worldly goods, bade *adieu* to the friends of their youth, and the burial places of their fathers, and departed, with joyful hearts, for that distant region of enchantment. Among those who were led astray by these high-wrought descriptions and fervent appeals was her husband. She, herself, combated the pernicious doctrines, and resisted, as wild and visionary, the idea of quitting home and country for such a far-off place; but the resolution of her husband overcame all opposition, he remaining confident, as if it had been revealed to him from on High, that when they arrived in the valley of the Great Salt Lake and were permitted to enjoy the ministrations of Brigham Young, the successor of the Prophet Joseph, they would enter upon a new and happier existence, to be compared only with that millennial time "when the lion and the lamb shall lie down together, and a little child shall lead them"!

Accordingly, they set out upon the journey, bringing with them their two daughters, leaving behind them one, a married woman, in Devonshire, and after a prosperous voyage, landed at Indianola on Matagorda Bay. The entire party numbered between one and two hundred. Here they made up a wagon train, breaking many cows to the yoke, think-

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ing they would be of service on the way, packed their house-
hold goods, furnished themselves with provisions, and
started through the Indian country toward the distant city
of the Great Salt Lake.

They struck the Río Grande at Eagle Pass, pushed on-
ward beyond the futhermost settlements, and for a month
were slowly winding among the mountains, when many
of their teams began to fail. A party of forty were thus com-
pelled to fall in the rear, and finally became separated from
their companions. With this party was the Haskins family.

They now began to be annoyed by the Indians. For sev-
eral days they had been seen scouring the prairies in dif-
ferent directions, ascertaining, perhaps, the strength and
quality of the train. They constantly grew bolder and bold-
er, in the daytime dashing up within a short distance, and
at night driving off more and more of their cattle, until, at
length, they were destitute of sufficient force to proceed.
In this helpless state, they were surrounded by a cloud of
savages, and taken prisoners.

In this party of forty were fourteen women and several
young infants. The men, among whom, of course, the hus-
band and father, were massacred without exception, the
women less fortunate, and the infants were carried away.
I turn with disgust from the contemplation of the cruelty
to which these captive women were subjected by the lust-
ful hellhounds as they bore them off in triumph to their
camps. Some idea of their barbarous nature may be con-
ceived from the fact that while on the way, when an infant
cried, it would be snatched from its mother's breast, a hole
cut under its chin, then hung on the point of a broken limb,
and there left to linger through its little painful life. In this
manner, I was assured by Mrs. Haskins and her duaghters,
every child unable to comprehend the danger of crying was
disposed of.

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727 On arriving at a large Indian village, the spoils were divided and distributed among the victors. These women fell into the hands of a chief, who transferred them, a short time after, to the Spotted Leopard. The mother, whose health had broken down under the hardships and sufferings she had endured, was made a common drudge in the camp, while the daughters were appropriated by two burly warriors, and compelled to serve them, both in the capacity of slaves and wives.

When I met with them, they had been with the tribe of the Spotted Leopard between two and three years. In the meantime the mother had grown extremely feeble, and latterly was so afflicted with rheumatism that she was incapable of performing any kind of labor. Of no further service in the camp, there was still enough of life left in her to gratify their thirst for cruelty. Assembling one day outside the town, near the close of my sojourn among them, she was brought forth, stripped, and fastened to the stake. The daughters, likewise, were bound to stakes directly in front of her, so that it was impossible for them to avoid witnessing her agonies.

The same infernal orgies were again gone through with which attended the cruel butchery of Martin and Stewart by the warriors of Big Wolf. Like them, she was first scalped, then cut and hacked with flints, and finally tomahawked, but not until long after life had become extinct. She fainted when the scalp was severed from her head, once or twice revived and screamed, fainting immediately again; and when the final blow was given, it fell upon a corpse! The daughters, likewise, screamed and swooned, and then revived to scream and swoon again; and when the mad rites were ended, were borne back, half-dead, amidst taunts and laughter, to their tents.

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Women Captives

These women, and doubtless many others like them, are now dragging out their weary lives in misery and captivity. Humanity pleads in their behalf. Would to God some pitying voice in the councils of the nation would so call attention to their unhappy state that measures would be adopted, as they might be, that would reach them in those lonely wilds, and bring them out of bondage.

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XIV

Another bargain and sale—Arrival at the village of Rolling Thunder—Uniformity of Indian villages—Euphonious names of Rolling Thunder's wives—Renewal of the covenant of the square stick—The wisest of the wise—Married to To-ma-no-a-ku-no, the Sleek Otter—The Indian duel—Visit to the ruins—Volcanic eruptions—Ancient architecture—The Indian legend—Mounds on the tablelands—Departure for the Grand Council—Incidents by the way—The tragical death of Rolling Thunder.

727 The Rolling Thunder was a frequent visitor at our camp, subsequent to the time when he and his tribe accompanied us home from the buffalo hunt. He exhibited a regard for me, and would often fall into a profound revery, when Kianceta, the Weasel, had presented me the watch, and I had caused it to communicate intelligence from the Great Spirit in the usual, rattling offhand manner in which it was accustomed to converse. His interviews with the Spotted Leopard became so long, and, to all appearances, of such vast importance that I had no doubt I was to be subjected to another sale and assignment.

My surmises proved to be entirely correct. Just previous to the time when preparations are made for the annual [361 buffalo hunt, the Spotted Leopard and some of his dis- 484 tinguished warriors, Kianceta, and his other wives, with myself and a considerable drove of pack mules, set off over the mountains in all respect similar to those I had pre-

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viously crossed, and after a journey of several days, at length entered a large town of, perhaps, two hundred tents, situated in a narrow, but luxuriant valley, over which the thoughtful and sedate Rolling Thunder had the honor to preside. On our arrival, the customary dances were duly performed—the bloody covenant of the square stick was solemnly renewed—the purchase money, consisting of skins and animals, was delivered in due form of savage law—and Kianceta, the Weasel, having braided into my long hair an incredible number of beads, as a parting token of friendship and affection, the Spotted Leopard, followed by his attendants, disappeared from my sight, thank God, forever.

The price paid for me on this occasion, so far as I could judge, exceeded even the price paid on the former sale; my value, in connection with the watch, bearing somewhat the same proportion to that of other, less fortunate captives, as the value of such trotting celebrities as "Ethan Allen," "Flora Temple," and "The Spirit of the Times" does in that of ordinary nags.

A description of one Indian village is, substantially, a description of all others. The same fashion of tents, the same regularity of streets, the same square in the center, characterize them all. The village of Rolling Thunder was situated in a more contracted valley than that of Big Wolf's or the Spotted Leopard's; in other respects it was the same. He had not neglected to take advantage of the privilege apertaining to his patriarchal office; consequently, he, likewise, had gathered into his tents four conjugal companions, whose euphonical names I here mention in the order of their ages. They were *So-waw*, *An-a-wak-ke-o*, *Ho-wawk-ke-no*, and *Se-ma-naw*, the Wise. The latter took charge of the watch, preserving it with all the care and tenderness that had distinguished her illustrious predecessors, Moko and Kianceta, the Weasel.

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157 624 551 Se-ma-naw, the youngest wife of the civil chief, possessed a cheerful and lively disposition, always frolicsome as the young antelope of the prairie. She was the daughter of the war chief of the tribe, *Sa-was-saw*, the Bear, and niece of An-a-wak-ke-o, who was her father's sister. The name of the prophet was *Han-na-nos-ka-a*, signifying the wisest of the wise.

622 157 The Rolling Thunder possessed a remarkably inquisitive mind, and was, moreover, extremely sociable. In the course of his life, he had several times crossed the borders of the Indian territory into Mexico, and had some faint notions of civilization—just enough to excite his curiosity. Hour after hour he would converse with me in his tent about the manners and customs of the whites. On these occasions, I endeavored to illustrate, in the best possible manner, their superiority and power. With a piece of charcoal, I would sketch on a sheet of birch bark the figure of a ship, "with wings whiter than a swan's and wider than many eagles"—its masts taller than the tallest cedar on the mountains—representing it as capable of carrying more than a thousand pack mules could bear; that in this great canoe, the white man would sail away over the salt water, beyond the sight of land, to a vast continent, distant more than a hundred days' journey to the east. He had never seen the [173] ocean; nevertheless, he comprehended its vastness through the traditions of his fathers, who once dwelt upon its shore; but no logic could convince him that the mighty land beyond it was a part of this globe; his reasoning leading him irresistably to the conclusion that it must necessarily belong 823 to another planet. When I told him the earth was round like a ball, and on the opposite side were extensive countries and millions of people—that if we could bore a hole through it directly beneath our feet, we would emerge into

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those countries, he laughed me to scorn, arguing that its 823
inhabitants would have to walk with their heads downward, and must necessarily fall off; besides, the premise upon which rested the superstructure of the argument was false, inasmuch as the earth was not round, but flat, a fact patent to the naked eye.

I described a train of cars, wooden tents placed above 000
rolling wheels, filled with a crowd of people outnumbering all his tribe, forced by the power of steam, such as he saw rise from the water boiling in his kettle, along an iron trail, faster than he ever saw the wild horse run across the prairie —endeavored to explain how they could converse, however distant from each other, through the marvelous electric telegraph, describing the immensity of their towns, the number of their warriors; in fine, whether under his own tent in the village, or encamped on the prairie after a day's hunt, he was constantly interrogating me upon some subject connected with their manners, customs, or inventions. Usually, 186
when I had concluded, the old man would remain silent a long time, absorbed in deep study, from which he would, at length, arouse and exclaim—"Wonderful! wonderful! are the works of the white man, but the Great Spirit will destroy them all!"

The Rolling Thunder evidently entertained a favorable 584
opinion of me. This was shown soon after my arrival in his camp, by insisting that I should take a wife. I took the matter into serious consideration, endeavoring to decide in my own mind what effect it might have on the chances of escape. The conclusion was that the effect would be favorable, and, accordingly, I signified to the chief that "Barkis was willin'."

The next step was to make a selection from the dusky daughters of the tribe, a matter about which I felt dis-

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posed to be somewhat fastidious. The chief sent for some half-dozen, submitting them to my inspection, before a choice was made. Some of them were hideous, either lank and cadaverous, or fat and flabby, having a fiery red new moon painted over each eye, and the full moon in the center of the forehead. These were rejected without hesitation or ceremony. At length one was brought that was pronounced entirely satisfactory. She was small and slender, very young and very agile. There was the grace of nature in her carriage, and, besides, she was not quite as filthy as her companions. She was arrayed in the latest Indian fashion when brought in for examination, wearing prettily embroidered moccasins, colored leggins, calico short gown of many colors, with a great diversity of beads braided profusely in her hair. She was distinguished as the most expert swimmer and deepest diver in the tribe; wherefore, they had bestowed upon her the name of *To-ma-no-a-ku-no*, the Sleek Otter. Altogether, she was rather a dirty but very comely maiden, in no wise equal to Kianceta, the Weasel, but much fairer than the great majority of her race. With her I entered into the holy estate of matrimony for the space of one moon. After the wedding festivities, the squaws generously assisted her in building a tent, bringing in presents of buffalo skins wherewithal to construct it, after the fashion of a donation party; and when it was finished, we moved in and "went to keeping house." The Sleek Otter made me a faithful and affectionate wife, skinned the deer, cooked the venison, pounded the corn, mended my moccasins, and in all respects performing her conjugal duties with cheerfulness and alacrity. The course of true love ran so smooth that we glided harmoniously through the third moon, and, therefore, became irrevocably joined.

Subsequent to the marriage my privileges were very much

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enlarged, it being considered improbable, I suppose, that I 593
would tear myself away from the partner of my bosom. I was no longer made the center-post at their war dances, but permitted to wear the gayly colored feathers in my hair, and with the warriors, "round about the cauldron stout, to dance right merrily." But I was by no means entirely at liberty, nor did their apprehensions that I would escape, if opportunity occurred, entirely vanish. I was not allowed to leave the village alone, nor to carry arms. My duties were those of an attendant upon the chief. He kept me near him always, whether on buffalo hunts or visits to the neighboring tribes. He frequently made these visits, when they required but one day's ride, with no one accompanying him but myself. At such times he was mounted on a power- [714]
ful horse, armed with bow and arrow and a musket—a tomahawk hanging from the pommel of his saddle, and a long knife in his belt; while I rode before him on a sluggish mule, entirely unarmed. We never passed the night together alone on one of these excursions. In a thousand little ways it was made evident he did not regard it exactly safe to place himself within my power.

The most thrilling incident I witnessed during my so- 593
journ with the tribe of the Rolling Thunder was an Indian duel. Among his warriors were two young men, both proud and spirited, between whom there had long existed a deadly animosity. The cause of their quarrel I could never fully understand, further than it appeared there was a young squaw in the case. Time and time again their differences had been brought before the council without any adjustment being satisfactorily effected. At length, when negotiation had become useless, it was determined to settle the matter forever in a most bloody manner.

It was a pleasant morning towards the close of autumn,

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578 when the whole tribe, save the squaws and papooses, assembled on a level piece of ground a mile from the village. Here they formed a large ring, into which walked the Rolling Thunder and Han-na-nos-ka-a, the prophet. The latter pronounced a long discourse, setting forth, as nearly as my imperfect knowledge of the language enabled me to comprehend, the original cause of the quarrel, a detailed account of its progress, the inability of the council to agree upon a satisfactory arrangement, and that, finally, it had been referred to the just decision of the Great Spirit, into whose presence their implacable brethren were now about to appear.

Having concluded, the brothers of the young warriors conducted them into the ring. One of them was, perhaps, twenty-two or twenty-three years of age, the other four or five years older. The younger was somewhat the largest, though both were remarkably athletic and powerful. When [284] they reached the center of the ring, meeting from opposite directions, their left arms, as far up as the elbow, were firmly lashed together with stout, thick cords of buffalo hide. They were bound so thoroughly that the possibility of breaking away from each other was utterly beyond question.

Into the right hand of each was then placed a hunting [412] knife, having a heavy buckhorn handle and a blade about nine inches long, evidently prepared for the occasion by being brought to a keen edge on both sides. The brothers then withdrew some twenty feet from the combatants, drawing from their belts similar knives, when the signal was given and the fight began. After that there was no call of "time"—no retreating to the "corner"—no planting the left heavily on the "mug"—they "toed the scratch" but once, and ended the combat in a single "round."

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Visit to the Ruins

The battle lasted but a moment, the bright blades, in 578
the meantime, glittering and glimmering in the sun, and the contestants instantly presenting the appearance of men suddenly overtaken by a storm of blood. At length, a mortal thrust by one was followed by a fierce blow from the other, gashing through the side of the neck, from which the purple tide of life spouted up in a high wide arch, when both fell lifeless to the ground.

Had either survived the conflict, according to their code of honor, it would have been the duty of his brother to have put him immediately to death. Throughout the exciting scene not the slightest partiality was exhibited. The faintest shadow of emotion could not be detected upon the countenances of the savage stoics as they gazed upon it. They were stretched side by side on the spot where they had fallen—buried in the customary manner—and left to rest together in peace, at last.

The week succeeding this tragedy, a party of ten or 484
twelve, including the Rolling Thunder and myself, started 224
on a long journey, its object being to ascertain whether the buffalo droves had changed their feeding grounds, before the warriors set out on their annual hunt. In the course of this trip we crossed a valley, the singular appearance of which has very frequently since been the subject of study and reflection.

On the summit of many of the mountains we passed, 172
were broad, level tablelands, destitute of a solitary tree, and covered with rank grass. Upon every one of these elevated plains was to be seen a mound, in most instances in the form of a half-circle, resembling the overgrown ruins of an ancient fortress, and plainly the work of human hands.

Finally we descended into a ravine, walled on either 133
side by rugged cliffs which led us a day's ride to the south-

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west, when we emerged into a valley about four miles wide and thirty long. It was surrounded on all sides by very high mountains, exceedingly bleak and barren. There was not a tree, or bush, or even a blade of grass to be discovered over the entire surface of the valley. It was covered, to the average depth of fifteen feet, as near as I could judge, with broken pumice stone, a substance precisely similar to the lava of Vesuvius. That it was the result of volcanic eruptions there was no possible doubt, inasmuch as numerous tracts down which it had flowed from the mountain tops were distinctly visible.

The Rolling Thunder, in order to convince me of the correctness of a belief, universal throughout the Comanche nation, conducted me to the western side of this strange valley, where I saw, with infinite astonishment and surprise, the dilapidated ruins of a large town. In the midst of the falling walls of a great number of buildings, which, in some remote age, beyond doubt, had lined spacious streets, was what appeared to have been a church or cathedral. Its walls of cut stone, two feet thick, and in some places fifteen feet high, included a space measuring two hundred feet in length, and, perhaps, one hundred in width. The inner surface of the walls in many places was adorned with elaborate carved work, evidently the labor of a master hand, and at the eastern end was a massive stone platform which seemed to have been used as a stage or pulpit. In my surprise at beholding so unexpectedly these evidences of civilization in that wild region, I turned to the Rolling Thunder and asked if he could explain it.

This is the legend of the Comanches, as he related it: Innumerable moons ago, a race of white men, ten feet high, and far more rich and powerful than any white people now living, here inhabited a large range of country, extend-

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ing from the rising to the setting sun. Their fortifications 773
crowned the summits of the mountains, protecting their populous cities situated in the intervening valleys. They excelled every other nation which has flourished, either before or since, in all manner of cunning handicraft—were brave and warlike—ruling over the land they had wrested from its ancient possessors with a high and haughty hand. Compared with them the palefaces of the present day were pigmies, in both art and arms. They drove the Indians from their homes, putting them to the sword, and occupying the valleys in which their fathers had dwelt before them since the world began. At length, in the height of their power and glory, when they remembered justice and mercy no more and became proud and lifted up, the Great Spirit descended from above, sweeping them with fire and deluge from the face of the earth. The mounds we had seen on the tablelands were the remnants of their fortresses, and the crumbling ruins that surrounded us all that remained of a mighty city.

In like manner, continued the Rolling Thunder, the 186
day will surely come when the present white race, which 773
is driving the Indians before it, and despoiling them of their inheritance, and which, in the confidence of its strength, has become arrogant and boastful and forgotten God, will be swept from existence. For the Great Spirit is *just*—and as certainly as the rivers flow downward towards the salt sea, or the sun rises in the morning and sets at night, so certainly will He yet restore the land of their fathers to the red man, when the days of his affliction are passed.

It would, indeed, be difficult to adopt any other hypothesis than the one entertained by the chief. The evidence before me was too clear and palpable to be controverted,

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that at some period, more or less remote, this valley had been inhabited by a people skilled in architecture and evidently possessing, in a high degree, a knowledge of mechanism and the arts. Whether the Rolling Thunder's account of their destruction is correct, or his belief that their successors will eventually be disposed of in the same summary manner is orthodox, will admit of argument; nevertheless, there is no doubt that, in common with all the tribes of the Comanches, he entertains this belief, in genuine sincerity. It is this unwavering faith in the future ascendancy of the red man, and the final restoration to him of all the possessions he has lost, which prompts him to perpetual resistance, and which so often led the Rolling Thunder to exclaim, after I had described some marvelous invention—"Wonderful, wonderful are the works of the white man, but the Great Spirit will destroy them all."

After leaving the volcanic valley and ascertaining the feeding grounds of the bison, we returned to the village, and soon again set forth on the yearly buffalo hunt. It is a singular fact that on these excursions the hunters are followed by droves of wolves. They seem to have an instinctive knowledge of the business in which the party is about to engage. As soon as the skin is stripped from the buffalo they surround the carcass and devour it. To wake in the dead of night, after dreaming, peradventure, of early home and friends, to find yourself under a rude tent, in those far distant wilds, surrounded by a savage tribe, produces sensations, lonely and desolate indeed—but terror mingles with the sense of desolation when, all around, the adjacent solitudes are vocal with the barking and snarling and howling of wolves, gorging themselves at their midnight feasts.

It was at such times as these my soul longed to reach once

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more the abodes of civilized man. Though greatly discouraged, I never entirely despaired of sooner or later effecting an escape. Aside from the charm which still lingered around the watch, the silver child of the sun, that had so providentially shielded me from unspeakable outrage during the earlier portion of my captivity, I was confident the covenant of blood into which I had entered, and more than all, my marriage with Sleek Otter, would henceforth save me from violence.

At this time I had no apprehensions whatever in regard to my personal safety so long as I remained an obedient captive, fulfilling the humble duties imposed upon me. A detected attempt at escape, however, I was fully aware, would be followed by the severest penalties. I had so long, and so intensely, contemplated the subject that there was no possible aspect in which it could present itself that had not received the closest and most careful scrutiny and consideration. Of one thing I had become thoroughly convinced, which was that if I had been successful in escaping from the tribe of the Spotted Leopard, without the means of killing game or making a fire, I should, most assuredly, have perished from starvation among the mountains.

It became necessary, therefore, to devise some plan by which, in case the opportunity offered, I could provide myself with these indispensable conveniences. It is probable I could, on many occasions, have reached the mountains unperceived after the marriage, had the attempt been made, but it was utterly impossible to have done so, providing myself at the same time with any kind of arms—the watchfulness over me in respect to them being strict and constant.

It was while indulging in these never-ending speculations that the Rolling Thunder ordered me to saddle my mule and accompany him on a long journey. It should be remem-

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oooobered by the reader that I have now brought down this narrative to the month of May last, wherefore the object of the journey upon which the Indian chief, at this point, is ready to depart, and which I gathered, both from himself and various other sources, may be regarded in many quarters as exceedingly important.

728 648 His destination was a village three days' journey to the north. At this place a general convention had been called, to be composed of all the chiefs of all the different tribes inhabitating the country between the northern bounds of Mexico and the regions of perpetual snow. The object of the convention was to induce the Indian nations, hitherto at variance, to bury the hatchet as between themselves, smoke the peace pipe, and unite in a universal bond of brotherhood, for the purpose of preventing the whites from passing through their territories to the settlements on the Pacific Coast.

It was, as I then understood it, and now believe, to enter into an alliance with the view of waging an exterminating and implacable war upon every train of emigrants or other party moving towards California, Oregon, the Great Salt Lake, or other points in either of those directions. How it terminated, circumstances unanticipated but of a most exciting and stirring character forbid my knowing, yet, that the design was precisely such as I have mentioned is a fact, which I beg all those who contemplate making the overland route to bear seriously in mind.

292 The Rolling Thunder, before taking his departure, arrayed himself with extraordinary care. A dozen scalps were attached to his war shirt; silver trinkets representing the moon in all its phases were fastened on his breast; his feet were clad in new and cunningly embroidered moccasins, and on his head rested a crown of feathers plucked from

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the crow, the kingfisher, the prairie hen, and the eagle, so dyed by his ingenious wives as to reflect all the colors of the rainbow. Of all the horses that grazed the wide pastures round about his camp, he was mounted upon the most fleet and spirited—the weapons of war in which he was accoutred were a knife thrust through his belt, a hatchet suspended from the pommel of his saddle, and a Mexican rifle, rare among his tribe, upon the possession of which he prided himself exceedingly.

I bestrode the same old mule that had so often and so far borne me on her back, with nothing hanging from my saddlebow but a huge buffalo horn wherewith to furnish my doughty master with cool draughts from the streams as we journeyed on the way. Saluting the Sleek Otter, who little thought it was the last nod she would ever receive from her long-haired spouse—for, not having seen a razor for three years, I was very far from being "the man all shaven and shorn, who married the maiden all forlorn"—we trotted away from the village, myself in advance, neither of us destined ever to return.

From early morning we traveled leisurely but steadily, and at sunset entered a valley wherein resided a small tribe whose chief was *Nis-ti-u-na*, the Wild Horse. The usual hospitalities were extended—or rather on this occasion they were unusual—inasmuch as a party had just returned from a meeting with the traders, bringing with them a quantity of mescal, a kind of whisky distilled from the fruit of a tree, commonly known in Mexico as the cabbage tree.

An Indian's dignity, whether chief or subject, never rises to that elevated degree which prevents his getting drunk every opportunity that offers, and consequently it followed, as a matter of course, that so distinguished a visitor as the Rolling Thunder, arrived at that peculiar juncture, could

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not avoid stretching himself on his buffalo skin that night without a weighty "brick in his hat." In other words, the sedate old fellow became beastly intoxicated,—forgot altogether the decorum that characterized his customary walk and conversation—vainly attempted to be funny—danced out of place—and whooped when there was no occasion for it—in fact, was as boisterous and silly as about half a gallon of bad whiskey could make him.

However, bright and early in the morning, the chief was again on his proper legs, ready to set forward on the journey, intending to lodge that night at another village farther to the north. After a breakfast of mustang steak, which rested ill on his sour stomach, we bade the sore-headed sons of the tribe of the Wild Horse good morning, and pursued our travel. Very soon we passed out of their valley and entered the defiles of the mountains. The last night's debauch had set the old chief on fire, and before the sun had halfway ascended to the zenith, his throat was parched, and he was mad with thirst. But there was no water to be found. On and on we went, threading our way through thick bushes, around the sharp points of overhanging cliffs, across rough and rugged ravines, but nowhere did a spring or running stream greet his longing eyes. We continued to press forward in this manner until about one o'clock in the afternoon, when, reaching the bottom of a deep hollow, we discovered water oozing from the base of a perpendicular precipice and trickling down a little muddy channel through the grass.

He called impetuously upon me to fill the horn at once. Though I attempted to obey his order with all possible celerity, the rill was so extremely shallow that in spite of my best endeavors, every dip I made, the contents of the horn would come up in the proportion of three parts mud

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to one of water. Perceiving the difficulty, he leaped from his horse, directing me to hold him by the bridle, threw his Mexican rifle on the ground, and laying down upon it in the grass, thrust his scorched lips into the little stream.

Standing by the horse's side, I observed the hatchet hanging from the pommel of the saddle. The thought flashed through my mind quick as the fierce lightning that the hour of my deliverance had come at last, and snatching it, in that instant, from its place, I leaped towards him, burying the dull edge a broad hand's breadth in his brain. A moment sufficed to draw the rifle from beneath him, jerk the long knife from his girdle, mount his horse, and dash wildly away over an unknown path, towards the land of freedom.

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XV

The flight—Barricades of thorns—Clambering up the precipice—The mountain terrace—The narrow pass—Sense of relief—A wild scene—Entrance into the second ravine—Approach of darkness—The lonely encampment—Melancholy speculations—The demands of appetite—Necessity, the mother of invention—Slaughter of the mule—Preparing provisions—An unusual vessel—The scent of blood—Surrounded by wild beasts—The impressive lesson—Continuance of the journey—Coursing down the valley—Taking the back track—Toiling over the mountains—Avoiding the Indian towns—Snakes and wild animals—Cloudy days—The north star—A twelve-day halt—Renewal of the journey—Abandonment of the horse—Pain and suffering—Meeting with traders on the prairie—Accompany them to San Fernández—Voyage to Cuba—Arrival in the United States—Conclusion.

Turning about, I retraced the path we had followed, some two miles, remembering to have seen a narrow defile stretching to the west as we passed along. Plunging into this, I spurred on at a breakneck pace, over piles of broken stones that had rolled down from the declivities, penetrated barricades of tangled thorns and brushwood, the mule all the while following closely at the horse's heels, and at the end of six miles, encountered a bold bluff extending entirely across the western termination of the ravine, abruptly arresting any further progress in that direction.

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The Flight

This bluff was the eastern side of a high, bleak, rocky spur, which shot out from a still more elevated range, right athwart the path I was pursuing. Wheeling northward and moving along its base, I reached, at length, a contracted crevice, half-filled with broken, sharp-angled fragments of rock, up which, with great difficulty, myself, horse, and mule managed to clamber, until we gained a comparatively level spot, a kind of terrace, some twenty feet wide, about halfway to the summit. Further ascent was impossible, and no other recourse was left but to follow the terrace whithersoever it led. Its surface presented, as an Indian would term it, a clear trail, and was undoubtedly one of the paths traversed by deer and other animals while migrating from one feeding ground to another. We followed it as it wound around the southern declivity of the precipice, becoming more and more narrow as we advanced, until, to my unutterable horror, it had contracted to a width less than two feet. A sharp point round which it circled just in front of me hid the view beyond, but all appearances indicated it terminated there. On one side were great, loose overhanging rocks impossible to ascend and threatening to fall, on the other, an almost perpendicular descent of at least a hundred feet. The horse hesitated to proceed, as if conscious of the danger to which he was exposed. Between the wall of adamant on the right and the precipice on the left, there was not sufficient room to enable either horse or mule to turn around, and so entirely did their bodies fill up the path it was impracticable for me to turn back, had it become necessary so to do, without pushing the poor brutes down the fearful steep.

With eyes turned away from the dizzy depth below, down which, in my despair, a strange impulse urged me to plunge and end a miserable life at once, I crawled carefully

to the sharp point before me, closely hugging the upper side, and peering round it, beheld with ineffable satisfaction that it expanded into a broad, smooth road. Much urging and coaxing, finally succeeded in inducing the horse to pass the point of danger. My sense of relief, when we had reached a place of safety, was like that of the awakened sleeper when he thanks God the awful chasm over which he has been hanging by a slender twig is but the vagary of a dream.

From the spot now gained, I gazed abroad upon the surrounding scene, and a wilder or more dreary one never broke upon my vision. On all sides around and above, were piled mountain upon mountain as far as the eye could reach. Here and there, among the defiles, could be discovered strips of timber, but the summits, as they appeared in the distance, were bare and rocky, their bald peaks stretching to the clouds.

After some examination, for I was in too great haste to linger, a narrow opening in a southwest direction attracted my attention, and towards it I turned my steps. The descent, though not entirely impracticable, was tedious in the extreme. The ledges were numerous and abrupt, and difficult to pass, often drawing me far out of a straight course. Finally, however, the opening was reached, proving to be another ravine averaging two hundred yards in width, over which were scattered cedar trees and clusters of thick bushes. By the time I had reached the southwestern termination of this little solitary valley, the sun had set, and darkness was fast spreading over the earth. Pushing into the center of a dense thicket, covering perhaps two or three acres, the loneliest spot that presented itself, I halted for the night.

Securing the horse to a limb by the bridle, and removing

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the buffalo-skin saddle, I sat down upon it and consulted with myself as to what it was best to do. My safety depended much upon circumstances. If the body of the chief should happen to be discovered immediately, my escape was doubtful. The moment it was found, my knowledge of savage life taught me, a party would instantly and eagerly start upon my trail, and at the same time messengers be sent to all the tribes far and near, calling on them to keep a sharp lookout for my approach, so that I had as much to apprehend in front as in the rear.

I was provided with the dead chief's rifle and ammunition, and consequently had the means of kindling a fire, but making the one or discharging the other, at least for some days, would be a dangerous experiment, inasmuch as the noise of the rifle or the light of the fire might expose me. The demands of appetite, however, would render it necessary to risk both, and, in fact, already were they becoming clamorous, having fasted since our early departure in the morning from the camp of the Wild Horse. Being impossible at that hour to capture game, my thoughts turned upon the mule. She had followed me unexpectedly and could be of no possible use; on the contrary, in all probability, would prove an annoyance. Necessity, which is, indeed, the mother of invention, suggested how I could turn her to account, and the suggestion was adopted. Walking up to the tired and patient beast, as unsuspicious of harm as was her now stark owner when he bent down to drink, I grasped the long knife that was wont to grace his girdle, and drew it across her throat.

When life was extinct, I cut from her hams long thin slips of flesh to the measure of some ten pounds, and having done so, resolved to run the venture of kindling a fire, trusting that the Rolling Thunder was still reposing undis-

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covered and undisturbed where I had left him. Accordingly, I gathered a pile of sticks, and withdrawing the charge from the rifle, ignited a priming of powder which presently resulted in a ruddy, and under other circumstances, a cheerful blaze. The mule meat was then broiled, and satisfying present appetite upon a portion, the remainder was carefully laid aside for future necessity. Thus provided with provisions for several days to come, it occurred to me that I might suffer for the lack of water on those thirsty mountains. The buffalo horn, though convenient at a stream or [115] spring, could not be used in carrying away their contents. Some kind of vessel was indispensable, and in order to be furnished with such an article, I cut the bladder from the mule, blew it up, dried it by the fire, filled it from a sluggish pool at hand, tying the mouth with a strong buffalo string.

These labors performed, with the reloaded rifle in my hands, I sat down on the buffalo skin at the foot of a cedar tree and leaned against its trunk. Here, a new terror awaited me I had not anticipated. The mule's blood had been scented by wild beasts, wolves and panthers, which began to scream. Nearer and nearer they approached until the horse snuffed and snorted, and I could hear their teeth snap, and the dry sticks crackle beneath their feet. A dozen times I was on the point of ascending the tree, momentarily expecting to be attacked. With such a crash would they break through the thicket that many times I bounded to my feet, thinking the Indians were upon me. It was a fearful night, and the most fearful sound that has ever fallen on my ears is the scream of the panther, so like is it to the plaintive, agonizing shriek of a human being. The fortunate resolution I had taken to build a fire undoubtedly kept them off, and the absence of Indians beyond the sound of their unearthly confusion was the sole cause of my hiding

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place not being disclosed. It taught me, however, a lesson not thenceforward to be forgotten, that is to say, never to encamp where I had killed my game.

In the morning, very early, I proceeded on the journey, and in the course of half an hour was again intercepted by another mountain. It was high noon, when I reached the summit, so rough and difficult was the ascent. Often, having entered a gully whose entrance allured me with the promise of a favorable path, I would break through dense thickets of prickly pear, the thorns piercing and tearing my flesh, until thinking I was about to emerge upon the plateau above, a wall of fallen stone, or the trunk of a prostrate tree, would suddenly present an invincible barrier, compelling me to return down the same painful path and seek, in another place, some more feasible passage.

During the afternoon, I kept my course, as near as possible, along the ridge of the highlands, but notwithstanding I improved every moment of the time, so rugged was the route it is probable I had not passed ten miles in a direct line from the place of departure in the morning when night again overtook me. This was passed under a ledge, in a little nook where a portion of the rock, in the form of a wedge, had fallen out. On such an eminence as this it would have been madness to light a fire—nothing less than a signal to any in pursuit to come up and take me—nevertheless, the tough mule meat, and the yet unemptied bladder, furnished me with a thankful repast. My poor horse, however, was not so well supplied, there being neither water or grass here, and but few bushes on which to browse. Wrapping the buffalo skin around me, I endeavored to sleep, realizing the invigoration it would bring was necessary to sustain the fatigue and hardship before me; but my slumbers were broken and troubled, full of fearful

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dreams, in which I was clamboring over rocks or pursued by Indians, yelling close on my trail, and yet, unable to fly, having lost the power to move, so that I arose with the first faint glimpse of the rising sun, sore and unrefreshed.

I continued along the height a portion of this day, and would have pursued it further, deeming it safer than a less elevated path, had it not become absolutely necessary to find water for my horse. This necessity induced me to make my way down the mountain side, a labor I succeeded in achieving towards the close of the day, when I struck a green, delicious valley, a mile wide in some parts, on which wild horses, a few buffalo, deer, and antelope were grazing, and which apparently stretched a long distance to the south. Fearing to adventure upon it in daylight, I hid in a cedar copse until dark, when, allowing the horse to slake his thirst at a rivulet, and feed an hour on the rank grass, I mounted and rode as fast as I could urge him until long after midnight, keeping in the shadows of the mountains. I had ridden in this manner at least thirty miles, congratulating myself on the rapid progress I was making, when the little valley came to a point, shut in by impassable precipices.

The opening day disclosed that I had been completely entrapped. The valley was surrounded on all sides by precipitous rocks, up which, in some places, I might possibly have made my way alone, but which it was beyond the power of the horse to ascend. My situation now became unpleasant, it being probable that a luxuriant valley like this, abounding in game and so rarely to be found amidst these sterile regions, must be frequented by Indians.

No alternative presented itself, but to turn back, retrace, cautiously, the course over which I had galloped with so much satisfaction the previous night. The whole of this day was occupied in traveling about fifteen miles. Along

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the south side of the valley which I was now coursing, at the average distance from each other of three-fourths of a mile perhaps, narrow points or promontories shot out from the side of the mountains, the space of prairie land lying between them resembling a half-moon or segment of a circle. From the extremity of one of these headlands I would reconnoiter, until satisfied the "coast was clear," then dash across to the next as fast as the horse could run. In this manner, as before stated, some fifteen miles were accomplished which brought me to the close of the day, and also to a path that opened a comparatively easy passage up the steep.

For two days I wandered over these mountains, rising constantly from ridge to ridge until the summit was attained and passed, and at evening of the sixth day of the flight descended into a dark, cavernous defile, where I found a spring of water and many deer browsing around it. The mule meat, besides being so tough as to demand the exercise of my utmost powers of mastication, was now nearly gone. Here, for the first time, I discharged the rifle, bringing down a plump doe, whose skin and hindquarters I carried forward four or five miles and halted for the night, leaving the remainder as an entertainment for the wolves. Selecting a secluded spot under an overhanging cliff, and approached through a thick growth of brushwood, I kindled, for the second time, a fire, and prepared a meal of venison. Though unsalted and unpeppered, and without the concomitants of currant jelly or other desert, after the hard fare upon which I had so long existed, no epicure ever enjoyed with a keener relish the daintiest dish that I did, slice after slice, of the juicy and tender steaks. Venison will remain in a state of preservation longer than the flesh of any animal with which I am acquainted. Notwithstanding

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the weather was warm, I was not obliged after this to shoot a deer oftener than once in three days.

The seventh day found me toiling over a succession of mountains smoother, and of a more gradual ascent, than any I had yet crossed. My course here led in a southwest direction, having conceived the idea, which subsequently proved very erroneous, that it would conduct me to the Mexican state of Chihuahua. At length, arriving at the height of land, a wide prairie unexpectedly spread out before me, over which numerous Indian horsemen were riding, and at my feet stood an Indian town of at least three hundred tents.

The prairie extended to the west farther than I could perceive, but the mountains that bound its eastern terminus were distinguishable at a distance, as near as I could estimate, of twenty miles. Anxious to escape, at once, from so dangerous a vicinity, I lost no time in coming to a resolution, which was to make the detour of its eastern extremity. In order to do so, however, it was necessary again to retrace my steps many rough and weary miles; but perseverance, incited by an apprehension of immediate danger, enabled me to "overcome all things," insomuch that late in the evening of the day following the discovery of the town I had rounded the point of the prairie and was encamped in a snug and solitary fastness of the mountains that lined its western side. Until I had passed far beyond this Indian settlement, I exercised the same caution as if assured intelligence had been conveyed to them of the death of Rolling Thunder, and as if I knew they were on the watch for my approach.

For nearly two weeks now I was lost in a vast range of mountains, sometimes going forward, at others compelled to turn back, winding through deep hollows, and climbing

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over abrupt precipices, often suffering with hunger and parched with thirst. I doubt if civilized or savage man ever before or since made the passage of this sterile region. During the day I directed by course by the sun, always keeping in view, as far as practicable, in my zig-zag progress some prominent peak far in the distance. At night I was guided by the north star. However, there were many cloudy days and nights, during which I was unable to proceed with certainty, and consequently lost much time.

There were many difficulties, hardships, and dangers encountered on this lonesome journey, a correct description whereof it is impossible for me to draw, or the reader to conceive. For instance, I was frightfully annoyed by snakes. It has been seen on a former page that the sight of these reptiles always inspired me with emotions of dread and terror. There was a flat-headed adder I frequently discovered on wet ground and near streams and springs of water; rattlesnakes were everywhere; but there was another species, a kind I had never seen, and am ignorant of the name naturalists have applied to it. It was of a brown color, rather slim, and as often exceeding as falling short of nine feet in length. It inhabited the clefts of the rocks, and stretched itself out on the ledges in the sun. One of its peculiar characteristics was to blow, when disturbed, emitting a loud, disagreeable, unnatural noise, half hiss, half bellow. Frequently while laboring up the steep side of a mountain, drawing myself up a declivity by grasping slight rooted twigs that had sprung up in the cracks and crevices of the rocks, as my head emerged above the surface I was striving to attain, one of these monsters would raise itself to the height of three feet and blow directly in my face. It made my "locks," which, indeed, were "knotted and combined, to part, and each particular hair to stand on

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end:" Bears were numerous, and occasionally a panther could be seen stealing noiselessly through the underwood, but these caused me very little, in fact, no apprehension whatever.

On the twentieth day Indians were again discovered. I had reached another valley early in the morning, and from a secure point was making observations, when I perceived them, to the number of a hundred horsemen, followed by a train of pack mules moving towards the west. There was no village to be seen, and I concluded, therefore, they were a party on a visit to some neighboring tribe, the buffalo-hunting season having passed. Watching them until the last one had disappeared and making myself certain others were not approaching, I hurried over the narrow valley at a rapid pace, and commenced another "crossing of the Alps."

By this time the horse had suffered so much from thirst and the want of forage that he had become emaciated in the extreme. His hoofs, likewise, were broken, and he was lame and spiritless. My moccasins, also, were worn out, my feet covered with bruises, and my whole body sore and stiff. In this condition we reached, one day, a singular spot, a deep basin among the hills, enclosing bottom land to the extent of ten or fifteen acres, covered alternately with patches of grass and thickets of brush and wholly shut in by lofty eminences. A spring, clear as crystal, gushed from the base of the mountain on one side, and a number of deer were feeding at different points. At this green spot in the desert I remained twelve days.

Though I had no mirror with me to make a particular examination, I expect my personal appearance was not especially attractive. Three years had elapsed since my beard or the hair of my head had defiled a comb, brush, or razor. My moccasins were dilapidated beyond redemption, my

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leggins and hunting shirt in shreds, torn in a thousand places by thorns and brambles. I still retained the deerskin band which bound my head and fastened on the forehead with a clasp, preventing the hair from falling over my eyes, but the little painted feathers with which the Sleek Otter had ambitiously adorned it, were long since blown to the winds of heaven.

My employments during the twelve days I halted in this solitary place were various. The most laborious portion of each day was spent in ascending one or the other of the adjacent peaks, and taking an observation of the surrounding region, in order to ascertain if an enemy was approaching. With much difficulty I cleared a small space in the center of the densest thicket, cutting out and pulling up the roots, whereon I erected a fireplace of stone, the object of taking so much pains being to kindle the fire where the thick shrubbery about it would, in a great measure, conceal the light. Here I went assiduously at work to provide for "a rainy day," in the matter of provisions, and to replenish my wardrobe. I shot four or five deer at different times, drying as much of the flesh as I deemed it convenient to carry, and manufacturing the skins into necessary articles of wearing apparel. The only tool I possessed was a knife, but with this managed to accomplish all I undertook. The moccasins were made of the hide while in its green state, applied to the foot with the hair inside, fastened with stout whangs of the same material inserted through holes made with the point of the knife and tied, and left in that condition to dry. I was familiar with the Indian mode of dressing buckskin with the brains of the deer itself, and had no difficulty in preparing new leggins and hunting coat. Perhaps the fit was not exactly admirable, nor the suit, taken as a whole, such as would be commended by a fashionable

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man at a select party; nevertheless, it suited the society with which I was then associating, and was extremely comfortable. I delayed several days after these arrangements were effected on account of the horse, which, notwithstanding he had plenty of pasture and water, did not seem to recruit, but, on the contrary, to be effectually broken down.

However, I set out again at the end of twelve days, arayed in my "new clothes," and with the bundle of dried venison hanging at the saddle bow, wildly imagining myself in the neighborhood of Santa Fé. My course now led over a mountainous region, if possible more difficult, barren, and desolate than any that had preceded it. Water was rarely to be found, and in many parts there was not sufficient grass on a thousand acres to supply the horse with one night's provender. He constantly became more and more tenderfooted and lame, the flesh had departed from his bones, and the proud and fiery spirit with which he had pranced out of his native valley, amidst the salutations of the tribe, with the Rolling Thunder on his back, was gone—completely gone. I was now compelled to lead him, stopping frequently for him to lie down. At length, the supply of water I had brought with me from the last spring was exhausted, and I was obliged to leave him on the mountains.

Rolling up the buffalo skin enclosing my drinking horn and other articles, and tying it with the bridle reins into the form of a knapsack, I threw it upon my back, shouldered the rifle, and bidding the poor horse a sorrowful farewell, started on alone.

Now for the first time my heart died within me. For aught I could discover, the abodes of civilized men were as far off as when I began the long and tedious journey. I began to doubt myself, to fear that I had become crazed and lost, and instead of pursuing the southwesterly course

Pain and Suffering

I imagined, was only wandering round and round over the same ever lasting solitudes. Moreover, since parting from the horse, who had been as a companion to me, whose presence during the silent hours of the night, stamping and feeding round me, seemed like a protection, I was lonesome and desolate indeed. And I was sick in body as well as soul. My limbs had become swollen and the wounds and bruises that covered me inflamed and painful.

In this condition of body and mind, several days after my leaving the horse, I came upon a fountain of pure water, gushing out beautifully from a rock. The cool draught was so refreshing and its application to my burning body afforded so much relief, I fully resolved to proceed no further, but there linger through the remainder of my life, which seemed fast waning to its close. A night's rest, however, relieved me somewhat of pain, inspired me with renewed hopes, and animated me to make another attempt to drag myself wearily along. But day by day I grew weaker as I advanced, the vigorous strength and hardy constitution with which Providence had blessed me breaking down under these incessant struggles and privations. Very often while reclining on the ground, my feet resting on some little elevation to relieve pain, it seemed certain that sufficient energy would not return to permit me to rise again, and still more often I prayed God that when I fell asleep I might never wake again.

The fifty-sixth day of my distressing travels brought me to a rolling prairie of considerable extent, dotted with many small groves of timber. Into one of these I had made my way to avoid the hot beams of the sun, and was lying in the shade, in a drowsy, half-sleeping state, when I was startled by the sharp crack of a rifle close at hand. My first thought was—is it possible they have chased me so

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far? Bounding to my feet, I held the rifle in my hands, ready to bring it to an aim as soon as necessity required, resolving, weak as I was, after such incredible suffering to stand on the defense. In the course of some ten minutes, instead of being rushed upon by a band of Indians, a mounted Mexican, wearing a wide-brimmed sombrero, came riding leisurely along, with a deer which had received its death wound from the discharge that had so astounded me, thrown over his horse's back, behind the saddle.

"How do you do?" he exclaimed, in mongrel Spanish, and much astonished.

Not knowing the character of the company into which I had so unexpectedly fallen, and deeming it prudent for safety to conceal my true story for the present, I walked up to him and addressing him in his own language, with which I am familiar, replied, "Sick and dying, will you help me, my friend?"

"How come you here?" he inquired.

"I have been lost among the mountains," I answered, "and have been trying to make my way to the settlements."

Much other conversation ensued, when he informed me he was one of a party of three who had been on a trading expedition to the Apaches, and were now on their return—that his companions were encamped not far distant—that they belonged to San Fernández, below Eagle Pass, near the Río Grande, and concluded by inviting me to accompany him to the camp. Perceiving how difficult it was for me to proceed, he dismounted and helped me into the saddle and walked by the side of the horse, conversing kindly, and evidently much interested in my behalf.

His companions were cooking when we arrived, and like himself, were greatly astonished at beholding me. However, they gave me a hospitable and generous welcome,

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exhibiting the true spirit of the Good Samaritan. In their train were eight pack mules, loaded with buffalo robes and furs, the proceeds of their traffic with the tribes. Their kindness won my entire confidence at once, and without further hesitation I related the whole story of my adventures. The interest my previous story of being lost among the mountains had excited was vastly enhanced by this disclosure, and no pains were now spared to administer to my comfort and convenience. The eight packs were rearranged so as to afford me one of the mules to ride, and we started on.

The third day we crossed the Río Grande upon a raft, swimming the mules and horses, and passing through a number of frontier settlements, at all of which my misfortunes were related by the traders, and followed by the kindest treatment. On the seventh day thereafter, we entered the town of San Fernández. The names of these humane and generous men are Antonio Halleno, Josef de Silva and Mario Francisco des Lezzez. I owe them a lasting debt of gratitude which I can only repay by proclaiming their noble-hearted generosity to a poor suffering wanderer among the mountains, wherever this narrative may go.

I remained six weeks at San Fernández under the care of a physician, at the end of which time Josef de Silva accompanied me to Matamoros. From thence I proceeded to Brazos Santiago and shipped for Havana, where, having fulfilled my parting promise to Aikens to communicate the intelligence of his fate, in case I escaped, to his friend at Corpus Christi, I set sail in the schooner *Elizabeth Jones*, Captain William Hudson, and on the tenth day of November, 1858, reached the United States.

I cannot conclude this history of my adventures and misfortunes without once more endeavoring to direct attention towards those captives, less fortunate than myself, who

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ooo still remain among the Indians. My own observation, together with the knowledge obtained from the chiefs and warriors of the tribes to which I was so long attached, places the matter beyond dispute, that a large number of white prisoners, principally women, are held by them.

Their situation, above all others, is eminently one deserving the consideration of humane and philanthropic persons. The barbarity and degradation to which they are doomed, render them, truly, especial objects of pity and compassion, and whoever engages to accomplish their deliverance will enter on a work of Christian charity.

If the proper effort were made in the right direction, beyond question, many of them could be rescued. It would not require an armed invasion of the Indian territory; such an invasion, however salutary it might prove in other respects, would in all probability result disastrously to the captive. There is a peaceful and far more economical mode by which their liberation can be effected, and this is through the instrumentality of the traders.

These compose a privileged class among the savages; are protected rather than injured by them. They are relied upon for their annual supply of knives, hatchets, calico, and trinkets. Arrangements could therefore be made with the traders to purchase the white men and women belonging to the several tribes with which they have intercourse—purchases easily to be negotiated if supplied with the necessary means. In most instances they are without friends, the survivors of emigrant families, attacked and overcome while journeying to the distant West. Bearing always in remembrance the awful scenes of agony and torture it has been my lot to witness, I can never cease to plead with my countrymen to interest themselves in behalf of those who are still in

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bonds, and subject to the same cruelties; ready, myself, 727
though prematurely old, to devote the remainder of my 439
days, without reward, to the accomplishment of their
ransom.